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631 particular, ceremonial services at the king's investiture, the building of huts at Fashoda, which is both the royal capital and the cult centre of Nyikang, and the upkeep of Nyikang's other shrines and those of past kings. These shrines are widely distributed throughout the country so that every section of it participates in the cult of Nyikang, who is, it must be borne in mind, not only the semi-divine hero of Shilluk mythology but also the king at every period of their history. Indeed, the shrines of Nyikang, what Professor Seligman calls his cenotaphs, are indistinguishable from the tombshrines of dead kings and they have the same ceremonial functions in the life of the people: in the rain-making ceremonies, at harvest time, and in times of sickness and pestilence.¹ The religion and cosmogony of the Shilluk are bound up with the political system through the identification of Nyikang with the king. The kingship stands at the centre of Shilluk moral values.

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¹ Prof. C. G. Seligman, 'The Cult of Nyakang and the Divine Kings of the Shilluk', *Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories* (1911), pp. 221 and 225.

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Nyikang who is the medium between man and God (*Juok*) and is believed in some way to participate in God as he does in the king. 'Nyikang is the *reth* but the *reth* is not Nyikang.'¹ The participation of Nyikang in the king raises the kingship to a plane above all sectional interests, whether local or of descent. All the Shilluk share in the kingship, however their loyalties may pull them apart in other matters, because in Nyikang are centred all those interests which are common to all the people: success in war against foreigners and the fertility and health of men, cattle, crops, and of those wild beasts which are of service to man. Professor Westermann tells us that 'everything they value most in their national and private life, has its origin in him'.² Mr Howell and Mr Thomson tell us that when a king dies the Shilluk say '*piny bugon*', 'there is no land'³—the centre of the Shilluks' world has fallen out. It is restored by the investiture of a new king, for though kings may perish the kingship, that is Nyikang, endures. Mr Oyler tells us: 'They say that if Nikawng should die, the whole Shilluk race would perish.'⁴

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¹ Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 8. ² *Op. cit.* p. xliii.

³ Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 18.

⁴ Rev. D. S. Oyler, 'Nikawng and the Shilluk Migration', *S.N. and R.* (1918), p. 115.

CHAPTER III

SHILLUK (CONTD.); OTHER SHILLUK-SPEAKING TRIBES

RELIGION

771 THERE are present three important and clearly defined elements in
the religion of the Shilluk, viz. :—

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1. The recognition and somewhat limited worship of a god, Juok.
 2. The cult of Nyakang and the dead kings of the Shilluk (ultimately reducible to the cult of Nyakang, since he is incarnate in every king).
 3. The cult of ancestor spirits other than that of Nyakang.

We shall discuss these in the above order, but must first point out that besides these outstanding features of his religion the Shilluk believes in various more or less anthropomorphic but non-human beings dwelling in bush and river, the most important of these being the river-people, with whom are associated herds of supernatural river-cattle.

771 The word *juok*, or some dialectical modification, occurs in all the
Nilotic languages as well as in some others, e.g. Lotuko. It always
776 connotes something in the nature of god, spirit, or ghost, but its practical meaning in one language may be quite different from that in a neighbouring tongue, while identical meanings in two languages may have very different values since a particular connotation of the word common to two peoples may refer either to an important or to an entirely subsidiary element in their religious beliefs.¹

776 Juok is formless and invisible, and, like the air, is everywhere at
once. He is the above Nyakang (in whose cult the Shilluk religion
762 centres) and men alike; nevertheless it is principally through Nyakang that men approach him, performing the sacrifices to Nyakang which cause him to move Juok to send rain. There are, however, prayers to Juok, and the word Juok occurs in many greetings, e.g. *Yimiri*

¹ These points may be summarily illustrated by comparing Shilluk, Dinka, and Acholi. In Shilluk, Juok though associated with the firmament is, apart from Nyakang, of comparatively little practical importance in daily life; to the Dinka *juok* are the mighty dead, appealed to on almost every occasion of difficulty or danger, while among both Shilluk and Acholi there are certain spirits of the bush known as *juok sin* who, greatly feared among the Acholi, are little regarded by the Shilluk. For an excellent discussion of the significance of the word *juok sin* Hofmeyr, *op. cit.*, 185-208.

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Juok, "May *Juok* guard you," while a sick man may cry, *Er ra Juok*,⁷⁷⁶
"Why, oh *Juok*?" ; but on the whole, *Juok* is so linked with⁷⁸²
Nyakang in the Shilluk mind that he is seldom approached in prayer
without the mention of *Nyakang* (and sometimes of his son *Dag*).
Indeed so obvious is this association that the Rev. D. S. Oyler writes :
"They never pray to God without invoking an intercessor,"¹ and
gives the following prayer as an example:—

"We praise you, you who are God. Protect us, we are in your hands,^[539]
and protect us, save me. You and *Nikawng* you are the ones who created,
people are in your hands, and it is you *Nkawng*, who are accustomed to
assist God to save, and it is you who give therein. The sun is yours, and the
river is yours, you who are *Nikawng*. You came from under the sun, you
and your father, you two saved the earth, and your son *Dok*, you subdued
all the peoples. The cow (for sacrifice) is here for you, and the blood will go
to God and you . . ."²

We do not know of any definite evidence of sacrifice to *Juok*
only; even in the all-important sacrifice for rain *Nyakang* is also
invoked. *Juok*, vaguely associated with the firmament, is recognized^[773]
as the creator, though now showing but little interest in his creatures.
The prayers offered directly to him, collected by Hofmayr, are such
dance songs as the following (we have paraphrased Hofmayr's literal
translations):—

"I pray to God (*Juok*), God the Giver (*uokatang*), God the Protector^[539]
(*Juokagim*); I have taken [God] to me and have become fearful to my enemies
so that they scarcely dare attack me." "The Shilluk when satiated chatter like
crows, they forget *Juok*; the Shilluk full of beer forget *Juok*." And a song
composed by King Yor: "I pray to *Juok* alone for he directs the spears,
spear thrusts are of *Juok*."³

Two subsidiary uses of the word *Juok* may be mentioned. There⁷⁷⁶
is an expression *pa Juok*, "the country of *Juok*". We formed the^[775]
opinion that though this implied no local habitation it was vaguely
associated with the dead; Hofmayr is more definite, regarding
pa Juok as the place of *Nyakang* and the ancestors, to be reached after
many months journeying in the bush. Certain diseases may in^[753]
a general way be described as *juok* (though each has its own name),
this term also being applied in folk-tales to men possessing supernormal
attributes. Summing up, we may say that *Juok* is the Creator,
perhaps vaguely associated with the firmament, but certainly having

¹ "Nikawng's Place in the Shilluk Religion": *S.N. & R.*, i, 1918, 283.
² Loc. cit. ³ Op. cit., 197-201.

- 776 a chthonic aspect. Juok is almost otiose so far as the daily life of the Shilluk is concerned, assistance being generally sought from Nyakang, whose flight from the land of Dimo in the Bahr el Ghazal to become the founder and first king of the Shilluk nation we have already recorded.

776 Mr. Heasty writes to us of the very numerous meanings attached
771 to the word *juok* in varying senses at different times :—
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"He appears to be one, and yet he seems to be a plurality as well, and the native himself is puzzled. . . . He will say there is but one *juok*, and then he will say of one who has been extremely fortunate that his *juok* is very good, while he speaks of another who is less fortunate as having a bad or angry *juok*. The foreigner is spoken of as *juok* because of the marvellous things he does. He flies through the air, or makes a machine that talks, so he is a *juok*. A badly wounded animal that is lost in the grass is *juok*, because it walked off dead and could not be found. . . . *Juok* is the creator of mankind, and the universe . . . but anything that the Shilluk cannot understand is *juok*."

776 Apart from his formal cult, Nyakang is the hero or subject of an
[538] enormous amount of folklore, and Hofmayr gives a list of twenty-five
[173] epithets or synonyms.¹ Yet, although he is a culture hero, at once the founder of the nation and the present day ideal of the Shilluk, we hold that Nyakang is no mythical figure projected on an historical background, but an historical ruler whose deeds and sayings—apart from obviously mythical elements—as enshrined in Shilluk legend and belief do constitute a record of actual happenings. Regarding the Shilluk attitude to Nyakang, we have no doubt that in spite of the saurian element in his ancestry (pp. 85-6) the majority of Shilluk think of Nyakang as a divine or semi-divine being, human in form and physical qualities, though, unlike his recent successors, he did not die but disappeared in a great storm of wind during a festival held at Akurwa; moreover, in spite of the fact that the objects kept in his shrines are fit for the use only of a creature with a human body, we believe that so many of his worshippers, including some at least of his priests, Nyakang is essentially a spiritual being, who manifests himself to humanity by way of incarnation or sometimes (as in dreams) as a bright light. We also recognize that in writing of the "spirit of Nyakang", as we frequently shall in this chapter, we are using the terminology of the European rather than of the African, who simply says "Nyakang", our reasons for not following the latter being that such usage leads to an ambiguity in view of the many

¹ Op. cit., 43, 44.

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classes of people, animals, and even things, in which Nyakang may be immanent or with which he is associated. 776 ●

The chief incarnations and manifestations of Nyakang are as follows:—

1. The spirit of Nyakang is regarded as closely associated with certain shrines, which are in fact cenotaphs, for though spoken of as his tombs it is well known that he is not buried in any of them. [778]

2. Each Shilluk king incarnates the spirit of Nyakang. 776

3. This is equally true of certain animals, and may possibly apply to all the members of particular species, as it certainly does to individual members. 775

4. The spirit of Nyakang is regarded as being present, at any rate at certain times, in his wooden effigy kept at Akurwa.

There are ten cenotaph "tombs" of Nyakang (*kengo Nyakang*) in the Shilluk country, the most important being at Akurwa and Fenikang. Each shrine consists of a group of two or more huts—of the same circular form but rather larger than dwelling huts—together with a small more or less circular enclosure, called *ludi*, neatly fenced with millet stalks. The huts are particularly well thatched, and the apex of the roof terminates in an ostrich egg from which there projects the blade of a spear, while the surrounding fence is kept in notably good repair. These huts, with the enclosed area, are sacred, for, with the exception of the priests of Nyakang and the old people concerned in keeping them clean, no one may enter the enclosure or even approach it without due cause. In 1910 the Akurwa shrine consisted of two huts, that at Fenikang of five, and these shrines, designed on the plan of a Shilluk homestead (with, however, the addition of the *ludi*), are so built because they are regarded as the homes of Nyakang. 776
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The attendants and priests of the royal grave shrines and the cenotaph shrines of Nyakang are known as *harvot* (lit. "king's wife"). This term includes certain old men, who appear to have an hereditary connection with the shrine (but on this matter we are unable to be precise), ex-wives of kings, who having borne a reasonable number of children¹ or attained the menopause are sent to take charge of shrines, and men and women of advanced years who are liable to more or less epileptiform attacks, held to indicate possession by Nyakang or a dead king. The *harvot* keep the shrine clean, receive the sacrifices, [58]

¹ Holmberg notes that the royal wives do not commonly bear more than three children; after this they are sent to a shrine and become *harvot* (op. cit., 140). [544]

778 gourds, seven articles described as plates—white and red, two very
346 large—seven similar but smaller articles, copper cooking vessels, many
Shilluk clay pots, and four elephant tusks; sacred water is also kept
here. This is the hut which Nyakang himself is thought to visit at
[77] night, arriving as a wind; music heard coming from the hut as he
plays his lyre (*shon*) is taken as evidence of his presence, and the
feeling that he still protects his people is vastly strengthened by
these visits. This hut was said to be built by the chief of the
Nyeiwal sub-district in which is Fenikang.

Wed Mac contains the cooking pots of Nyakang, and here fire is
made and food cooked.

Dag, or Kwayo, represents the hut in which Dag slept.

[672] Dewol—also called Nyakang—was the hut before which Nyakang
heard disputes, and the rest still sits in front of it and hears cases when
he visits Fenikang. Mr. Hearty was told that the small children
of the village might sleep in this hut when mosquitoes were bad,
and at Fenikang it was said that four tusks were kept here.

The *hufi* is stated to be a place for the king, where he may urinate
and perhaps bathe.

782 The worship of Nyakang at Fenikang and his other shrines consists
796 of a solemn ritual of sacrifice and prayer. We know of the following
occasions for ceremonial worship; no doubt there are others of which
we did not hear, and we do not doubt that sacrifice would be made
in any threat of national danger or disaster. We give in brief outline
accounts of the two most important annual ceremonies:—

- [803] 1. The rain-making ceremony held before the rains at the beginning
of the month *alshor*, at the new moon (the Shilluk calendar is lunar).
2. The harvest festival held when the millet is cut, i.e. about the
end of the rains.

[643] At the rain ceremony a cow and a bullock are given to Nyakang,
the latter being killed and the former added to the herd belonging
to the shrine. Both should be given by the king, who at the Fenikang
shrine himself takes part in the ceremony. The bullock is slain
with a sacred spear by one of the *Awak* before the door of the shrine
enclosure, while the king stands near the hearth praying loudly to
Nyakang for rain and holding a spear pointing upwards. After the
meat has been eaten by all the *Awak*, the bones and as much blood
as can be collected in a gourd are thrown into the river, and the skin
is made into a mat for Nyakang. Much of the millet preserved in

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the men rose and each made a short speech, to which Aker answered; these speeches were appeals to Nyakang not to let the millet suffer from the ravages of the birds. When all had spoken, Awejik, brother's son to Ayurid, stroked the bull's flank with a spear and then thrust it into the beast. Immediately he ran with the spear to the khor to wash it. The wound was oblique and only a few inches deep. The bull was now guided into the enclosure of the shrine, where it was stabbed again with another spear and led into the enclosure of Kwayo while Aker and the chiefs remained just outside. The groans of the dying bull were heard for some time. The chiefs now followed into the courtyard of Kwayo but we do not know whether any of them entered the hut. The flesh of the sacrifice was divided and eaten subsequently by Aker and the men of Golobogu and Panetti. A band of warriors in full dress bearing their spears now returned to the dancing-ground, danced once round the sacred enclosure, then knelt down and clapped their hands and went silently away. We were told that the spear used to kill the bull was one presented specially by the king; had one of the original spears of Nyakang been used no one could have eaten the flesh of the bull and survived.

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It must be noted that before the ceremony we were told that Ayurid was the hereditary bull slayer, but his paternal nephew certainly thrust the first spear; we did not ascertain whether he or Ayurid finally killed and cut up the beast. Probably the matter was of little consequence, as Ayurid was old and Awejik would succeed him. Before the ceremony we were also told that the beast would be stabbed outside the fence but would enter the shrine before dying, and this was so. The sacred character of the spears was a matter of importance; the large spear referred to above was kept sheathed throughout the ceremony until used to stab the bull, thus emphasizing its sacred quality.

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So much for what we saw. We were told that the spear would be washed in the holy water kept in the hut Kwayo and that after this it would be taken to the river to be washed. The right forelimb of the bull would be cut off and shown round the village—we believe that this went to Ayurid—the rest of the beast was Nyakang's and would be taken to Aker's house, there to be eaten by the old men.

Our description of the worship of Nyakang may conclude with a short account of his appearance in animal form, as well as some reference to the cult of his mother Nkaiya, almost as much associated

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776 as woman.¹ Certain of the Shilluk kings, i.e. particular incarnations
775 of Nyakang, tend to be identified with particular species of animals.
825 Nyakang, Dag, and Nyadwai all appear as a white bird called *otak*,
or, rarely, as a giraffe; if the animal comes straight towards the
village in which the shrine stands, exhibiting no sign of fear, it is
concluded that it is a spirit animal, and the attendants at the tomb
sacrifice a sheep, or perhaps even a bullock. Father Banholzer adds
"long-bodied grasshoppers" and "a kind of snake called *red*" as
forms in which Nyakang appears. Dr. Lambie of the American
Mission informed us that unusual behaviour on the part of almost
any land animal would lead the Shilluk to look upon the creature as
a temporary incarnation of Nyakang, adding that unusual behaviour
on the part of a water animal would be put down to the animal
incarnating the spirit of Nikaiya (Nyakai); so "if a little bird flies
into the midst of a crowd of people and is not frightened, or attracts
someone's notice in a special manner, they say 'Nyakang'".
Occasionally Nyakang appears as a bull; in 1910 a very old Shilluk
of the royal family said that in his youth, fifty or more years earlier,
Nyakang appeared as a white bull, when the king ordered sacrifices
to be made in addition to those already offered by the local chief.

We may add an experience of our own. Yur Adodit takes the
form of an insect called *akwun* (Ar. *gumal on nek*), which appears to be
the larval form of one of the *Musoidae*; we only discovered this
important belief by the fortunate accident of an *akwun* settling upon
our camera while we were making inquiries near the grave shrine
of Yur Adodit, which was being repaired. We were about to examine
the insect when we were told by Col, whom we had been questioning,
not to touch it. The *jaga*, with his face showing the greatest pleasure,
took the insect in his hands and reverentially carried it to the shrine,
only the base of which had been built up, and deposited it on a leafy
branch which was thrust into the ground in the centre of the shrine,
i.e. over the grave of Yur Adodit. Col told us that the appearance
of Yur Adodit in his animal form showed that he was favourably
disposed to us and was not displeased at our inquiries concerning
the shrine, and after this incident it was distinctly easier to obtain

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773 ¹ According to an account, perhaps of Anash origin or at least showing Anash influence,
collected by the Rev. J. E. Griffin on the Sobat river, Nikaiya is physically part human part
crocodile. In the beginning Jack crossed a great white cow, Dening Adok, who came up out
of the Nile. She gave birth to a male child, whose grandfather, Ukwu, married two sisters,
of whom one, Nikaiya, or Nibid, the lower part of whose body was that of a crocodile,
brought forth Nyakang, who inherited his mother's crocodile attributes (*The Anglo-Egyptian*
India, 1904, 191).

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information from Col and his people. According to Banchela (quoted by Hofmayr)¹ the praying mantis is regarded as the messenger of Nyakang, so it seems likely that our undetermined insect was a larval mantis.

We may here refer to the special regard paid to trees growing near the shrines of dead kings, which we consider yet another aspect of the cult of Nyakang. This custom is not remarkable, for the Shilluk country is in the main bare, with few shady trees, so that any tree growing in or on the outskirts of a village is preserved and the ground becomes to some extent a meeting and squaming place. But the Shilluk attitude appears to be something more than an appreciation of their grateful shade, though we could discover no regular cult. When a tree has grown, or is believed to have grown, near a shrine shortly after its erection, i.e. within a few months or years of the burial of a "divine king", it is thought that the tree has sprung from one of the logs used in making the grave, and in such cases the relation between the tree and the dead king is one that would easily suggest itself.²

Possession by the spirits of Nyakang and other Shilluk kings, i.e. conditions of dissociation attributed to these, will be considered when discussing medicine-men, especially the good medicine-man (*giaga*).

The Shilluk attitude towards the crocodile is naturally influenced by the belief in the saurian attributes of the ancestors of Nyakang, and especially of his mother. The crocodile is generally spared, as some of the worst man-eaters are believed to be men whom other crocodiles have taken, and very dark coloured crocodiles are said to be either man-crocodiles or their descendants. Moreover Nikaiya lives in the river, and is definitely associated with the crocodile, and, though she may assume human form and at times come to the village by night in all friendliness, she may seize a man or a woman and bear him or her off to her home in the river and there change her

¹ Op. cit., 31.

² As an instance we may cite an old tree at Kachik where many were standing in 1902 near the grave of Nyabral, the reddish king: if anyone had burned the wood of this tree, even accidentally, he would have defamed, and when the tree fell its fragments were collected and carried to the river, just as are the bones of certain sacrifices. There was in 1902 no shrine over the grave of Nyabral, probably because it is situated some little distance from the present native village and is surrounded by Government offices and houses, but it had a fence round it, and a young tree that had appeared at some distance from the stump of the old tree was regarded with respect. The old tree did not really spring from the grave of Nyabral, since it was situated that during his lifetime it stood near his house and that he would often sit under it; nevertheless, there is a general feeling that it is associated with his grave, and this feeling is so strong that many Shilluk at one time or another speak of Nyabral being buried under the tree, though his grave must be nearly a hundred yards away.

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775 victim into a crocodile to be a spouse to one of her crocodile relatives.
625 Yet Nikaiya brings back to those whom she visits by night to ask for
776 for; if a barren woman bears a child after such a visit it will be called
771 Nikaiya, and the father will kill a sheep and throw it into the river.
625 Nikaiya is known by her short stout figure and great muscular develop-
ment, and by the fact that she "eats" (swallows) her words. That the
river is the true home of Nikaiya is shown by the manner of sacrificing
to her; for as a sacrifice would be made at the shrine of Nykang,
or at the grave shrine of any Shilluk king, if Nykang or one of the
kings had appeared in a dream—or if a king had "possessed" a man
causing him to become ill—so when Nikaiya becomes immanent
sacrifice is made by throwing a live sheep, with its legs bound, into
the river.

[55] Holmsay states that the *harak* may divine that a new-born infant
[55] has been sent by Nikaiya; if a boy it will then be called Nikaiya,
776 if a girl Nikaiya.¹ When such a child grows up and becomes
772 betrothed an offering must be made to Nikaiya as part of the wedding
ceremony. The couple go to the river, where the *harak* slaughters
a male black and white sheep, seasons the young people with the
contents of the stomach, and seasons the ear-lobes with beads on to
the feet of the bride. Beer, tobacco, earth, and parts of the sacrifice
are thrown into the river for Nikaiya, and the betrothed ladies
in the river. They are then conducted by the *harak* to a house prepared
for them in the bride's village, and must remain there for three or
four days.²

776 There is a limited cult of the Dinka god, Dengit, perhaps confined
774 to the southern part of the country. Fig. 2 of Pl. IX represents
771 a shrine to Dengit in Odong hamlet, not far from Fankang, and we
[57] both saw and heard of other instances. The example figured is,
as far as we could determine, unlike any Shilluk shrine and was said
to be of Dinka pattern. The present incumbent took over the shrine
at the death of his grandmother, a Dinka woman, who had been
possessed by Dengit to whom she erected the shrine. The iron
[72] bracelets shown in the photograph have all been brought by Shilluk,
who visit the shrine in considerable numbers. No doubt the
possession of the present incumbent resembles the Shilluk possession
by their *ror* (kings).

776 We should also mention the spirits of the bush and river, i.e.
creatures resembling mankind in form but with non-human functions

¹ Op. cit., 177.

² Holmsay, op. cit., 177.

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- 776 and habits. The spirits of the bush are we believe in the main unimportant, but the river people and their river cattle play a more considerable part in the mythology of the people. One of the groups of people whom Nyakang found in the land were fish-men, or river-men with the power of turning into fish, while the mysterious cove whose dung provided the "ashes of denying" (p. 102) had their original home in the river.

643 It is convenient to consider the cult of the dead Shilluk kings apart from that of Nyakang at his cenotaph shrines, but it must be remembered that in every king there is immanent the spirit of Nyakang, so that the worship rendered them at their grave shrines is ultimately only part of the cult of Nyakang.

778 Like the cenotaph shrines of Nyakang the royal grave shrines are called *lungs*, as opposed to the graves of commoners for which the word is *ron*.¹ Though smaller, they resemble the shrines of Nyakang in appearance, for the roofs of their constituent hut vermines in curlew egg and spear-head. The guardians or *giems* (*hars*) of these shrines are of the same class as those of the *lungs* Nyakang, viz. elderly women, often widows of the dead king, and old men, his former servants, or their descendants who have reached the requisite age, or, as a last resource when none of these can be found, old women or old men not specially connected with the dead king. Just as no one except the *hars* Nyakang is allowed to enter the shrines of Nyakang, so no stranger may enter the royal grave shrines.

[64] A royal daughter never becomes a guardian of a shrine, but she may enter the grave shrine of her dead father and rub her hands on its floor for a blessing whenever she likes, as may the royal sisters. It seemed that these privileges did not extend to the shrines of other dead kings, nor even to the enclosed space around them. Should the spirit of a dead king appear to a royal daughter or sister in a dream and demand an offering, she would take a sheep to the guardians of the shrine and give it to one of them to sacrifice in the same way as a commoner. There are cattle belonging to the grave shrines of the kings, and offerings are made as at the shrines of Nyakang. Thus, when the millet crop threatens to fail, or epidemic sickness to attack the cattle, Nyakang or one of his successors will appear to someone in a dream and demand a sacrifice. This is told to the king, who will immediately send a cow and a bull to one or more of the shrines

[65] ¹ By *lungs* the word "the", but "go away", and in addressing the king a special court language

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retreat. Around our house they went in a regular company, and having in a line again in front of the house for another charge.

This they repeated a number of times. Then a crowd of women, who had followed their husbands and acquaintances to battle, joined the part of the, only to be overcome by the more warlike and driven back. This part was very amusing. One old lady with great heavy marched out and charged, using her pipe as her weapon. The men were a bit rough in driving her back, and she was evidently afraid her dear pipe would come to grief, so she took it inside our house and when next we saw her she was in the thick of a fray with a long sword as her weapon of offence and defence.]

The day seems to also the time for travelling. Relatives pay formal visits, and unmarried young men go to the Feast and Dishes with spouses, wine, meat, and furs, which they exchange for sheep and calves.

IV. RELIGION.

In the religion of the Shilluk three components are clearly distinguishable: 1. *Jock* (*Jock*) or God; 2. *Nyakang* (*Nyakang*), the propitiator and national hero of the Shilluk; 3. *ajwaga* (*ajwaga*), the white demon or sorcerer. These three do not exist separate from each other, but have many relations amongst one another. There are still other forms of religious service, but they are not so prominent as the three mentioned.

"*Jock* (*Jock*) is a supreme being, residing above". Whether he is regarded as creator is not sure. According to the sayings of some natives he surely is, but it seems probable that this belief, if there is such a one, is young, and must be traced back to Mohammedan or Christian influence. — On certain occasions an ox is killed as a sacrifice to *Jock*, though this is done more frequently to *Nyakang*; prayers are also offered to *Jock*, but according to my information, they have only one prayer to *Jock* (for which vide page 171), while to *Nyakang* there are many. "Praying" to *Jock* is expressed by a different word from that which serves for designating a prayer to *Nyakang*; the first is *nyaga*, its original meaning is probably: to confess. In praying to *Nyakang* usually "to ask for, to beg" is used. While the prayers to *Nyakang* are long, and accompanied by dances, that one to *Jock* is only spoken, not sung, and not accompanied by dancing. *Jock* has no visible symbols or temples, nor are the prayers to him offered by a priest or sorcerer, but by the chief or village chief.

In the heart and mind of the Shilluk *Jock* does not possess a deep-seated rank. In some way they do attribute good and evil to him, and chiefly the

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later, when a person is ill, they may say: *gi jesh* "Why, Jew?" The sudden and violent death of a man is regarded as being caused by Jew. But I do not think there is any ethical motive in our sense underlying this belief; Jew has simply killed the man for having offended him, probably without knowing it. The name of Jew is used in a favorable sense in the following phrases of education: when a person arrives, he is asked: *gi jesh jesh* "you have brought Jew?"; on one starting on a journey they say: *gi wij jesh* "you may hold fast Jew". — Jew has also the meaning of "dishonest"; the reason for this is the conviction that Jew is the cause of dishonesty; "he is dish", they express by "he has Jew", "Jew is upon him".

Although the Skidske does certainly not connect with the word Jew the same notion as we do with "dish", Jew is sometimes the only word fit for being used in the Christian sense. It is true the word seems in reality to rather a disappointed sense, any being with more than natural powers being called a Jew; but this is so in analogous cases with many African peoples, and will almost always be so in heathen languages; it can therefore not form a real obstacle for using the word in Christian preaching and literature.

[In other literature the name Kijpe appears as that of the "creator of the Skidske." I have never heard this name].

The tradition on the origin of man or rather of the Skidske leads to the second and most important part of the religious position of the people, viz. the worship of Nyilung. This tradition runs thus: A white or rather greyish cow, *giel* which came out of the sky, she brought forth a girl; when this girl split, a man and a female came forth out of it (vide page 175). The name of this man was Kijpe; Kijpe began Owey, who began *Wu Hji* ("son of Hji"); *Wu Hji* began Owey. Owey used to go to the Skidske; here he met repeatedly two children who had come from out the water, they were very beautiful and had long hair, but the lower part of their bodies was like the form of a crocodile. One day Owey seized the girls and carried them away. Their mothers brought out their fathers, who all then had not been seen by Owey. His face and the left side of his body were like human, but his right side was green of color and had the form of a crocodile. When asked he declared his name to be Oijipe, he presented against his daughters being taken away by force, but afterwards consented. Owey married the girls. The names of the two children were Nyilung and Oijipe (Nyilung and Oijipe). One of Nyilung's sons was Nyilung according to some this was the eldest child, while others say he was the youngest. Nyilung had some children besides Nyilung; of one son the name is known, he was Oijipe; the names of his daughters are (according to A. E. S.) *Ad Dui*, *Ad Uduin*, and *Wuyung*. Owey's second wife Oijipe gave birth to one son, *Jo* or *Joey*. Owey married

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- 773 a third wife, whose eldest child, a son, was called Dwaet (*Dwaet*). The name *Dwaet* also occurs as that of a son of Okwa, but I could not make out who his mother was. Nyikang was in form partly a man, and partly a crocodile.

[The exact pronunciation of Nyikang is *Nyikā*, but the final *g* is often omitted: *Nyiki*; the form *Nyikā* also occurs; in older literature the name is written *Nyikan*, *Nyikan*. *Nyikā* is a composition from *ni*, an "ear" and *Kiā*, which is probably a proper name; thus *Nyikā* means: "son of Kiā." The name *Kiā* occurs also in *Okā*, which is composed from *O* and *Kiā* and means "descendant of Kiā"; *Okā* is another name designating the Shilluk people. But about *Kiā* the traditions, as far as they are known, say nothing. — Frequently Nyikang is simply called *ni* "king".]

- 776 Nyakayo (*Nyikāyo*), the mother of Nyikang, exists up to the present time. Her residing place is about the junction of the Sobat and the White Nile. This is remarkable, as according to the tradition she did not originate with her son Nyikang, and yet does not now live in her original place, but in the Shilluk country. She sometimes appears from out the river, generally in the form of a crocodile, but at times in other forms. No worship or sacrifices are offered to her, but when a man or animal is taken by a crocodile, this is attributed to *Nyikāyo*. When she does this, the people must not complain; it is rather an honour, when she takes her children from a village.

NYAKAYO, THE
MOTHER OF
NYIKANG

- 675 In dubious judicial cases Nyakayo is resorted to as judge. The accused one is tied in a cross, and a goat is bound and laid on the river-bank near by. This latter is done to allure a crocodile. If the accused one is taken by the crocodile (i. e. by Nyakayo), he was guilty. But not infrequently the delinquent, from fear of being harassed by the crocodile, confesses his crime.

- 773 Between Nyikang and one of his brothers, probably Dwaet, there arose a quarrel after their father's death; according to some, about who should follow the father in the chiefdomship, others say it was a quarrel about cattle. As they did not come to an agreement, Nyikang together with Dwaet, his brother, and his half-brother *Jo* (and his three sisters), left the country,* seeking for a new abode; when he started, Dwaet threw a digging stick after him, whosoever to dig the ground (or to bury the dead). Several times when he met on his way, joined him, thus increasing the herd of his followers. Nyikang settled about the mouth of the Sobat, and here founded the kingdom of the Shilluk. To increase the population of his new foundation, he changed animals and fabulous beings whom he found in the place, into men, built villages for them, and made them his subjects.

NYIKANG'S
EMIGRATION

While residing in the Shilluk country, Nyikang fought many wars, among *NYIKANG'S WARS*

* "Impelling village and flying away to the mouth of the Sobat", A. E. S.

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others one against the sun and his son; vide page 159.

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When he felt his end approaching, he assembled all the chiefs of his kingdom for a splendid festival. While all were merry, suddenly a great wind arose, and scattered all those present. In this moment Nyikang took a cloth, wound it tightly round his neck, and thus choked himself.¹

But many Shilluks firmly believe that Nyikang is still alive. The Rev. Oyster writes to me: "When I asked how Nyikang died, they were filled with amazement at my ignorance and stoutly maintained that he never died. If he dies, all the Shilluks will die. He, Dei, and five other kings ascended to heaven, where Nyikang prays for the Shilluks (?). They say that he disappeared as the wind".

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HOW NYIKANG
IS ADORED.

Nyikang is the ancestor of the Shilluk nation and the founder of the Shilluk dynasty. He is worshipped, sacrifices and prayers are offered to him; he may be said to be lifted to the rank of a demi-god, though they never forget that he has been a real man. He is expressly designated as "Father" in comparison with God.

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In almost every village there is a little hut dedicated to Nyikang, or to some other ancient king. In form it is like the common houses, but much smaller and more slender. On its walls sometimes rough drawings in white, red, and black colour are seen, consisting simply in line-ornaments or representing animals. These drawings are made by women, with white, red and black earth, and are renewed every year before the chief prayers are offered. These huts are commonly called *ket rig* "place of the king" i. e. of Nyikang. Besides these small huts they have a number of greater temples, which are in form like the Shilluk huts, but of much larger size. They are found in most of the villages devoted to Nyikang. These "sacred villages" are, Akurwar, Wan,² Fanyikang, Nyikado (Nikido), Oyo, Nyelwal, Oduro, Oduro, Idiyo. These houses, the small as well as the larger, are the places where Nyikang is worshipped. In them, at least in some, a number of reliques are preserved, which are considered holy and are held in great veneration. Among these are a statue of Nyikang made of antelope-wood; the holy spear, drum, and shield of Nyikang, a digging stick, ancient metal ornaments and clothes, etc. Spoils from wars are also dedicated to Nyikang, and are preserved in the temples.

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In times of need, when sickness or war are threatening, but above all when rain does not come in due time, the people assemble round the house of Nyikang and pray to him. This is done by dancing and at the same time singing prayers. At the beginning of the rainy season, when they are about to plant corn, the regular chief prayers take place; on this occasion an animal is slain as a sacrifice to Nyikang. Before the transaction of any serious business the elders of the village assemble around the temple of Nyikang, to ask for his counsel.

¹ The collection of the Shilluks by the British all ascending Shilluk Kings have followed their lives by the same form of death.

² This Wan is not the place in the Upper Shilluk Frontier, but is situated on the left bank of the White Nile between Tufelle and Badi.

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By Nyikang also oaths are sworn. The expressions mostly used in swearing on oath are: *Nikol oho!* i. e.: "Nyikang indeed", "by Nyikang!" *Nikol owa!* i. e. "Nyikang here!" or: "Nyikang now!" Another form is to couple his name with any of the sacred villages, as *Nikol a Wan!* i. e. "by Nyikang of Wan!" Likewise *Nikol a Nheul*, etc. In their conversations they are constantly using these oaths; they often make promises under oath, which they, however, readily break without any fear of penalty. They swear also by Dak, or any other of the ancient kings.

Another mode of swearing, which is used in judicial cases only, is to swear by the holy spear (of Nyikang): the *ojigga* who keeps the spear, sacrifices a sheep and puts the blood upon the accused and the accuser, and offers a prayer that justice may follow. Now the accuser or the accused or both swear by the holy spear. If a person perjures himself, death is sure to follow as penalty.

Nyikang at times appears in the forms of certain animals, as jackass, cat, snake, hawk, or in birds. The tree on which such a bird alights, is considered holy, and is hallowed dedicated to Nyikang; beads and pieces of cloth are suspended on its branches, sacrifices and prayers are offered below it. When once the Turks felled such a tree without knowing its destination, terror fell on the by-standing Shilluk; they walked in procession round the tree, filled the air with lamentations, and killed an ox to propitiate their ancestor.

Though Nyikang is considered inferior to Jwak, sometimes the names of both are called simultaneously in the same prayer. In some prayers the name of Dak, a son of Nyikang, is also invoked beside that of Nyikang; but this is not frequent. It seems, however, that in some measure the nearest descendants of Nyikang, or rather the ancient kings of the Shilluk, enjoy some kind of veneration, though perhaps this may not be called religious. They sometimes talk about the *ro*, which is the plural of *ri* king, and has in this connection the meaning of "Prophet", or one analogous to that of the "Judge" of the ancient Hebrews. In several villages there are huts, like those of Nyikang, dedicated to one of these ancient kings or "*ro*".

In the political, religious and personal life Nyikang takes a far more important place than Jwak. Nyikang is the national hero, on whom each Shilluk feels proud, who is praised in innumerable popular songs and sayings; he is not only a superior being, but also a man. He is the sublime model for every true Shilluk; everything they value most in their national and private life, has its origin in him: their kingdom and their fighting as well as cattle-breeding and farming. While Nyikang is their good father, who only does them good, Jwak is the great, uncontrollable power, which is to be propitiated, in order to avoid his inflictions of evil.

 SWEARING
OATHS BY
NYIKANG

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NYIKANG
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 JWK AND
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VII. TRADITIONS ON NIKĀŊO.

50. Nyikang's Parents.

Oduhēlē ye Okwa, ye ejima nam kē mayi Nīlāk, Nakae, ae Ke. Ka jē ēj kga nam. Ompa Nakae fene aek, lēlē kē gēg. Ka jē ēj tugg kugug, kine: wēhē yau? A kē Dāk, a hant aē aē, a nēpē gē, a bēl, a yēl, a lēhē Dāk kine: ē bēlē yē! Kine: ē tūh yē cū? Kine: a chōmē! Kine: Nakaye, kōrēd a chōm yē kōrē! Kine: a chōmē yē? Kine: ye kēlē kē? Kine: ē nōmē! Kine: ē! yē lēhē yē yē kē chōmē, aē jē hēhēd nam. Ka gēg mēhē yē aēh. A lēhē aēh kine: nam hē lēhē yē lēhē! Dē fē wēhē jē! Kine: dē dēhē! a yēlēd yē, yē lēhē wēhē yē lēhē lēhē. Yē fē ēj nōmē wēhē yē ēj aēlē wēhē. A gē lēhē, a ēj lēhē aēh wēhē, aē gēhē lēhē. Ka gē mēhē aēh. Ka chēk mēhē yē gēhē kē aēh.

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In ancient times Okwa (the father of Nyikang) married the (woman of the) river, the mother of Nyikang, Nyakae, the daughter of Ke. And the people used to go to the river. The brother of Nyakae was the crocodile, it lived with the men; and the people used to play on its back saying, "Our grandmother, ah!" One day Dak went, he took the children of the crocodile, he killed and roasted them. When the children were searched for, Dak said, "I have roasted them." Nyakae (the brother of Nyakae) said, "How is that?" He replied, "I have eaten them." Then the mother of the crocodile said, "Nyakae, my grandchildren have been eaten by your grandchildren." He replied, "Have they really been eaten by them?" He asked, "Where will you go now?" The woman replied, "I will remain in the river." Nyakae said, "No, because you (and your children) will in your turn also be eaten by it (the crocodile), when the people (your children) come to wash." So the men now are caught by the crocodile. The crocodile said, "You (men) can never pass a river again, and you never will drink water from the river." Then Nyakae (the man) said, "All right, if ever I find you (crocodile) lying outside the river, I shall surely catch you. You shall never sleep outside the river, you (shall only have sufficient time to) lay your eggs on the river bank." And a harpoon was made. During the time when the crocodile comes out of the river, the cows swim across the river; but (often) they are seized by the crocodile. This is the beginning of the enmity between man and the crocodile.

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[Another Report on the Descent of Nyikang and on the origin of the Shilluk people, given in A. E. S. page 197:

In the beginning was Jo-ek (Jog), the Great Creator, and he created

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a great white cow, who came up out of the Nile and was called Doung Adok (*duet adok*). The white cow gave birth to a man-child whom she nursed and named Kola (*Kole*); Kola begot Umak Ra or Omara (*Omara*), who begot Makwa or Wad Maul (*wat muf*), who begot Ukwa (*Okwa*). These people lived in a far-off country, nobody knows where.

Ukwa was one day sitting near the river when he saw two lovely maidens with long hair rise out of the river and play about in the shallows. He saw them many times after that, but they would have nothing to do with him and merely laughed at him. It should be mentioned that their lower extremities were like those of a crocodile.

One day Ukwa found them sitting on the banks, so he came up behind and seized them. Their screams brought their father, Ud Diji, out of the river, to see what was the matter. Ud Diji, whose right side was green in colour and in form like a crocodile, whilst his left side was that of a man, protested mildly, but allowed Ukwa to take away his daughters and wed them, merely giving vent to a series of incoherent prophesies regarding them.

Nih-Kiya (*Nyaka*), the older sister, gave birth to two sons and three daughters, and Ung-wai, the younger, to one son only, named Ja, or Dawa. The eldest son of Nih-Kiya, was called Nyakang (*Nih-kang* or *Nyakan*, = *Nyika*) and inherited the pleasing crocodilian attributes of his mother and grandfather. Meanwhile Ukwa married a third wife, whose eldest child, a son, was named Dawa.

On Ukwa's death there was a furious quarrel between Nyakang and Dawa as to who should succeed Ukwa. It ended by Nyakang, with his sisters Ad Dai, Ad Unkar, and Ben Yang, his brother Unai and his half-brother Ja, acquiring wings and flying away to the south of the lakes. Here they found the Shilluk country inhabited by wicked Anka, so they drove them out and founded a most successful Kingdom. According to their genealogy this would have been about 1100 A. D., or later.

Nyakang had a creative power which he used greatly to the advantage of the Kingdom. In order to people the vast territory more quickly, he proceeded to create a people from the animal life he found in the forests and rivers. From crocodiles, hippopotami, and from wild beasts and cattle, he created men and women. When these had brought forth many children, the parent stock was consumed by death, so that the children might not know of their origin.

The new creation and their offspring from the Shilluk race or common people, in distinction from the direct descendants of Nyakang's family.

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Origin of the Shilluks

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The latter continue to bear authority and fill the priestly function to this day. All outside the royal and priestly line are accounted Shullas.

Nih-Kiaya still exists. She never died and never will. The western part of the Sobat and part of the White Nile is her favourite abode. She often appears, usually in the form of a crocodile, but at times in different forms and always in the river or on its banks. No sacrifices are ever offered to her. When she wishes, she takes what is required from among men and beasts; and when it is so, the people must not complain; indeed, it is an honour when Nih-Kiaya is pleased to take her sacrifice of man or beast from a family.]

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The Origin of the Shullas.

By Dr. T. Lambie, of Doleib Hill.

Nyikang, Duwad, Ja, Gik, Odo, and Mei were the sons of Okwa. Okwa was the son of Omara from heaven. Nyikang's mother was Nyikaya, Okwa's other wife was Ugwet. Nyikang and Duwad were twins, they lived far away to the south. Okwa was ill and his village was deserted, so the people asked, "Whom shall we elect king?" Part of the people said, "We will elect Nyikang," others said, "We will elect Duwad," so it came to pass there was war and the people were divided. Nyikang came and turned aside to the country of the Din, and there he married the mother of Dak, and Dak was born. Dak was wicked and killed some people of the Din, and the Din said, "Boch! all the people are being killed!" So they agreed to kill him, saying, we will kill Dak. Another man, called Ologi kept alliance there at the council when they spoke, and when the people asked him, "Did you not understand our talk?" he said, "Ah! like a deaf and dumb person. And they struck him and said, 'This fellow do not hear.' Then Ologi went to Nyikang and told him about the plot. Nyikang replied, 'Ah! very well, we shall see.' So the father came and brought a wooden figure and put it up. And his son Dak played on the tom (stringed instrument), and when he had finished playing, he took off his bracelet and put it on the image in his house and the Din people came to his house and opened the figure. And when they thought they had finished killing it, they said, "He is dead, good!" They went away, and all the people came and began to lament saying, "Dak is dead!" They killed a dog, and when they had finished, Dak came, while the people were dancing his funeral dance. Dak came in and saw them. And Nyikang said, "We will separate from you, we go to look for corn." So they came and stopped here in the home of the Shullas.

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It would appear, therefore, that in judicial and administrative matters the Shilluk *reth* is far from being an over-riding or autocratic political authority. Local chiefs seem to be free to follow their own traditional courses without such interference. In actual powers of government and administration, and in personal prerogative, the *reth* may be little more than a mediator in disputes and perhaps the balancing force which decides a quarrel one way or another. It is in ritual matters that his real position and powers are indicated.

THE RITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RETH

Evans-Pritchard writes: "Both his functions and his status are primarily of a ritual order. He makes sacrifices on important occasions, especially for rain and for victory in war, and it is his duty to provide cattle for the sacred heath of Nyikang at Nyiluni and Wan and a canoe for Nyikang's shrine at Nyibudha."⁽¹⁾

It is noticeable that everywhere there is the closest connection between the political structure and the religious cult.

(a) The territorial segments and their association with certain dominant lineages are explained in terms of the myth of Nyikang's division of the country among his followers who became the founding ancestors of many of the Shilluk clans.

(b) The lineage heads who are chiefs of settlements have ritual duties as the kingship. They perform ceremonial services at the time of the *reth*'s investiture, are responsible for building huts in *bachaba* and for the upkeep of Nyikang's shrines and those of past *reth*s. The tombs of the dead kings are indistinguishable from the shrines of Nyikang and have the same ceremonial importance in rain-making ceremonies, harvest rituals and so forth.

(c) The traditional customs of the people and the organization of society in every way are considered to be the work of Nyikang directly or acting in the line of *reth*s.

(d) The identification of Nyikang with the king is the central point of the Shilluk political, ritual and social system. The people believe that Nyikang reigns and manifests himself in the *reth*. Nyikang is also the medium between the Shilluk and *bach* - their chief spirit. The Shilluk consider the *reth* to be in close communication with the spirit forces of life, and Nyikang is the connecting link, participating in *bach* as he does in the *reth*.⁽²⁾

The *reth* is considered to come under the category of *Shoon* Kings, as described by Fraser in *The Golden Bough*. This is clear from the mode of his death and succession as well as from the duties he performs during his lifetime.

Succession of the Reth

Only the son of a *reth* who has reigned is eligible, and a *reth* may

⁽¹⁾ Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer Kingship of the Shilluk*, 1961, pp. 10-17.
1962, p. 29.

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- 52 would marry women from lineage A as this would prevent the correct working of the relationship of avoidance and would confuse the situation. Each lineage therefore develops a tendency to marry women of some other specific lineage, (1) but this is a traditional convention only and not compulsory.

In addition to the ordinary one relationship between two lineages it is dangerous for a man to have sexual relations with a member of a lineage which is one in the second degree. B, C and D may have an one relationship, through customary intermarriage, with other lineages, E, F, G and H. If a man of lineage A seduced a girl of lineage E then all the men of lineage B would be offended, since they regard marriage with girls of E as their prerogative, and there is an one relationship between the two lineages as there is through A and B. Serious sickness would result from the offence in the same way as if a man had relations with a woman who was a blood relation.

Terminology

- 62 Pongbey gives a list of Shilluk kinship terms, (2) among which may be noted the absence of any single word for brother, such a kinsman being described as father's son or mother's son. The Shilluk kinship terms used to describe members of the immediate family are extended to others of the same generation, and from this descriptive terminology a classificatory system is formed.

RITUAL AND OTHER CULTURAL FEATURES

- 71 There are three major aspects of Shilluk belief and ritual: the recognition and worship of Juck, the cult of Nyikang and the kings in whom he has been reincarnated, and the cult of the ancestral spirits. In addition there are less important beliefs such as the belief in the spirits of the bush and river.

JUCK

- 76 The concept of Juck is found in many of the Nilotic tribal groups although beliefs concerning it vary. Among the Shilluk Juck refers to a spirit which is universal, formless and invisible like the air. Juck is above Nyikang and men though he is approached principally through Nyikang. The Shilluk perform sacrifices to Nyikang which cause him to send Juck to send rain, to prevent misfortune, remove sickness and so forth. Juck is so linked to Nyikang that he is seldom approached in prayer without mention of the latter as intercessor. Juck is vaguely associated with the flood-crest and is recognized as creator though he is believed to show little interest in men owing to his greatness which is so far above them.

Delaney (3) states that the Shilluk put adjectives to the word Juck in order to bring out one or other of his attributes:

(1) Pongbey, S.S.S. 1941, Vol. II, p. 30.

(2) Ibid., pp. 27-9.

(3) Delaney, *Die Shilluk*, 1923, pp. 106-7 and p. 109.

Juk Ficere,	means a whirlwind;
Juk Nui,	" river spirit;
Juk Awari,	" creator;
Juk Juk,	" things made by Juk such as food etc.;
Juk Yin,	" wood spirit;
Juk Ayin,	" protector.

Anything that cannot be understood is Juk. Juk is thus a plurality but he is also one spirit; he may be either good or bad, or neither, he is potentially all three. He may bring sickness, may protect people or he may merely stand aloof from human affairs. Certain diseases are specifically associated with him. The cult of Juk is not expressed in any external action or ritual; it is found in a few songs and prayers, and Juk is invoked only when appeals to the ancestors and to Nyikang fail.

THE CULT OF NYIKANG

Nyikang is the hero of most of the Shilluk myths and traditions. He is the culture hero, founder of the nation, and the popular ideal, and though probably an historical person in the first instance, his acts and words have become sacralized in myths. The Shilluk regard him as a divine or semi-divine being. They say he did not die but disappeared in a whirlwind during a festival held at Abura. The spirit of Nyikang is supposed to be present in certain places, men and animals. Every rock at the summit of his installation, when sitting on the royal stool, is possessed by the spirit of Nyikang so that it is Nyikang who becomes king again (see above). The spirit of Nyikang is regarded as closely associated with certain objects, which are regarded as his homesteads; in particular he is present, at certain times, in his effigy at Abura.

There are two shrines of Nyikang in Shilluk country, the most important being at Abura and Fanyikang. Seligman describes them as a group of two or more huts, of the same circular form as dwelling-huts but slightly larger, enclosed in a fence of millet stalks. The huts are particularly well thatched and the apex of the roof terminates in an ostrich egg from which projects the blade of a spear. (1) The huts are taken to all except the priests of Nyikang and the old people who tend them. The attendants and priests of the royal great shrines and the shrines to Nyikang are known as barth; they are the ex-vires of kings, people liable to epileptic fits (which are held to indicate possession by Nyikang or a dead king), and certain old men who appear, according to Seligman, to have a hereditary connection with the shrine. The barth keep the shrine clean, prepare the cereals and officiate at the ceremonies. They eat the meat of the sacrifices and drink the milk of the cattle belonging to the shrine.

The worship of Nyikang at his various shrines consists of sacrifices and prayers. The two most important annual ceremonies are the rain-making ceremony, held just before the rains, and the harvest festival, when the millet is cut and first-fruits are offered to Nyikang. Each year with should send cattle to each shrine of Nyikang and also various other persons. Offerings are given at the shrines when a person is sick or when Nyikang should make him well. Offerings and ceremonies involving Nyikang's and are

made at all times of stress and misfortune. Everything round a shrine is sacred, especially trees - they are particularly rare in Shillukland in any case.

Certain Shilluk kings, particular incarnations of Nyikang, tend to be identified with particular species of animals. If such an animal approaches the shrine without signs of fear, it is assumed to be the form in which Nyikang appears, and a sacrifice is offered at the shrine. Almost any unusual behaviour on the part of an animal would lead the Shilluk to look on it as a temporary incarnation of Nyikang. Nyikang's mother, Nilaiva, is reputed to have been a crocodile and is believed to live in the river in that form. A sacrifice is made to her by throwing a live sheep into the river. The crocodile is generally spared even though these creatures are a danger in river crossings.

There is a limited cult of the Ninka spirit Dengait, and also a belief in the spirits of the bush and river.

THE CULT OF THE ANCESTORS

Beliefs concerning the ancestral spirits are vague. Reference is made to *pan juk*, 'the country of the dead', which is reached by the spirit after long wandering through the bush, but it is also believed that the spirit persists in or around the grave. Offerings and sacrifices are made to the ancestral spirits by the head of a household or local lineage on behalf of the descendants. If there is sickness or misfortune or the possibility of danger, a person will pray to his ancestors and make an animal sacrifice to propitiate them.

The ancestral cult seems, however, to be overshadowed by the national cult of Nyikang and the royal ancestors.

SHAMANIC BELIEFS

Beligun suggests that Shilluk taboos may have been derived from the Ninka because it seems so slight and unimportant. According to Beligun and Westermann the clans appear to have taboos and some clans derive themselves from an animal or fish which Nyikang took and turned into people in order to repopulate the country. Beligun states that taboo animals are often killed but it is considered wrong to eat them.⁽¹⁾ Most taboos are animals but a few are plants. Children inherit their taboos from their fathers; a woman keeps hers even when she is married.⁽²⁾

MAGICAL PRACTICES

The *Sietcha* (*Ayango*)

Ayango means 'son of Juk'. Such people are regarded as possessing certain magical powers which they use for the good of the community. People go to them when they are in need of help and pay them for their services. The powers of the *ayango* are believed to be due to their

(1) Beligun, *See Shilluk*, 1951, p. 226.

(2) *Ibid.*

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partly a creative process, and there is no writing to establish a preferred and approved text. Shilluk experience and knowledge of their world, which we have try to understand by analysis and systematisation, is by them synthesised in an imaginative whole, at the centre of which are their early leader and hero, Nyikang, and the divine being which they call Juk. Though Juk is thought ultimately to dispose what happens in the universe, Nyikang, who created the Shilluk kingdom, is the subject of most mythology. There is nowhere any indication that the Shilluk have formulated elaborate ideas of the general order of all creation. Their notion of cosmogenesis is of the creation of that order which, as they see it, was built up by Nyikang, and has been maintained by his successors, the Shilluk kings. Before considering the wider significance of Nyikang and Juk, it is convenient to give a brief account of the land of the Shilluk, the life they lead in it, and the general outlines of their social organisation. With these in mind, it is possible to analyse their cosmological ideas in the broad outline to which an essay of this length is necessarily restricted. 776 773 121

Environment and History

The Shilluk live along the west bank of the Nile in the south of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, where their hamlets are built in close succession, following the line of the river from around Kaka to Lake No. They are about 100,000 people,¹ densely settled on a narrow strip of savannah country nearly 200 miles long, and four to five walking-hours in width. The soil is black and fertile near the river and its lakes, becoming sandier towards the neighbouring Arab country to the north and the Arab and Nuba country of Kordofan to the west. On the east bank of the Nile are the related Dinka, the Shilluk's neighbours to the east and south, and there are Shilluk settlements, bounded by Dinka and Nuer, on the east bank and on the lower reaches of the Sobat. Though their ways are predominantly those of a cattle-herding people, the Shilluk lead more pastoral, transhumant life than the Nuer or Dinka.² Their cattle are estimated at 25,000, and they keep sheep and goats. Since their settlements are strung along the bank of the Nile, they can find grass for their herds near home in the dry season, from January to April, and cultivation areas to receive more time and attention among them than among less sedentary Nilotes. From June to September the rains fall, and much of the country becomes flooded. The early rains are the time for sowing the staple crop of millet, of which many varieties are grown, along with maize, sorghum, and various beans and pumpkins. These depend upon the rains, and are harvested between September and November. Tobacco, also called 'the grass of the ancestors', depends on land-watering from the river, now which it is grown in the dry season. 105 [16]

¹ The authorities vary considerably in their estimates of the human and cattle population. The figures given here are derived from those given by Mr. John David, of the Sudan National Service, and published by *Fortnum & Mason-Prichard*, 1948.

² P. P. Howard and W. P. G. Thomas, 1948.

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ornaments—which are among the royal emblems of the Shilluk at the present day, and are given to a new king at his installation.¹ The crossing of the river and the fight with the Sun seem to be occurrences of great imaginative importance for the Shilluk, as they are for the Western Dinka, in whose mythology they appear in a different form, and by whom they are associated, though in different ways, with a mythical leader who in many ways resembles Nyikang. It may be mentioned that the sun, in Shilluk country, seems to be at its hottest at the end of the dry season, just before the rains, and its heat is in a sense overcome when the rains fall. Nyikang is believed to bring the rain, and in that sense still revives his people by sprinkling them with water. At this time, too, those who have been herding cattle for the dry season on islands in the river or in pastures on the east bank of the Nile, must return to their homes on the west bank to cultivate, crossing the river in order to do so. The subduing of the Sun, and the crossing of the river by Nyikang and his followers, thus recur in different form in the lives of the Shilluk. They still have to take their cattle to pasture across the river during the dry season, and return home with them when the rains start. Westermann says that:

The Shilluks along the White Nile cross over to the east bank; likewise the cattle of the Sobat Shilluks descend to the lagoons south of the Sobat. So in both cases they have to cross the rivers, which is, on account of the many crocodiles living in them, not undangerous, and is therefore done with much care and accompanied by weighty ceremonies in order to keep the crocodiles away; this forms an important part of the duties of the witch-doctor.²

In the account he gives of such a river crossing, it is said that the cattle are led behind ambatch canoes which the Shilluk use.³ It will be remembered that the effigy of the 'crosser of the river', Nyikang, used in the installation ceremonies for the king is also made of ambatch.⁴ Nyikang is important for that crossing on which the Shilluk herds depend for their grazing. In another Shilluk text Nyikang asks his mother, Nyakapa, to dry up the river in order to help his people against foreign enemies.⁵

In the stories here summarized, Nyikang, the leader and first king of the Shilluk, is able to affect celestial phenomena—he may also raise winds and bring rain—and he divides the river to lead his people across. By aquatic descent he is linked either with a man from heaven or with a special creation of God, and through his mother, Nyakapa, he is linked with the river. He is also the leader by whom the Shilluk were first differentiated as a separate people, and who gave them their present land. His praise-names and titles of honour acknowledge and record his association with sky, river, and earth. Apart from those already mentioned, he has the names 'heaven'

¹ Crumrine, 1924, p. 38.

² Westermann, 1912, *Introduction*, note-xxx.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁴ Thomson, 1928, p. 126. This is a correction of Howell and Thomson, 1924, whom it is said that the effigy of Nyikang was made of bamboo, like that of his son Odi.

⁵ Haldane, 1923, p. 25.

or 'the above', and 'dwarf'; he is called 'son of the Nile' and 'son of the river'; and in hymns he is called 'our earth' or 'master of the earth'. Thus, all three regions of the Shilluk universe are nominally united to Nyikang, and he to them. It is the single person of Nyikang which gives all three regions their coherence in a single world. There is no other figure in Shilluk mythology, except his successors and representatives the Shilluk kings, who thus associate earth, sky, and river, belonging in part to all.

Significance of Nyikang in the Shilluk World View

Although Nyikang was a man, and is conceived as such by the Shilluk, he is believed not to have died, and thus he is not identified with ordinary men.¹ He is said to have disappeared. Opler² gives some of the expressions which the Shilluk use of Nyikang's end: 'he was lost', 'he returned to his country', 'he went up', 'he became wind', 'he went and lives': all expressions implying that he did not die. He adds that the Shilluk say 'that if Nkawang should die, the whole Shilluk race would perish'. Even now the king of the Shilluk is not spoken of as having died, though the later Shilluk kings, unlike Nyikang and his immediate successors, are thought to have become mortal. Since, as I have suggested, Nyikang is a notion by which the Shilluk apprehend a unity and coherence in the specifically Shilluk world, it is understandable that now, when a king dies, the Shilluk say, 'there is no land—the Shilluk country has ceased to be'.³ It is not simply that Nyikang and his successors are thought to maintain the order of the Shilluk social and natural universe as though from a position above and outside it. In Nyikang, and in the kings, the parts which make up that order are correlated, and the correlation is apprehended in a single term, Nyikang. He and his successors are thought of as real historical persons, living at their own particular times and with their own unique characteristics and legends. They also represent the idea of a timeless state, unaffected by the chronological succession of events. Every king, representing Nyikang, represents the principle which unifies the Shilluk as a nation, and brings into focus the widest range of specifically Shilluk ideas about the order of nature and of society.

It was Nyikang who first separated the Shilluk people from others of the same stock, who ordered them not to mix with their early enemies,⁴ who differentiated them among themselves by associating different lineages with different territories and, where intemperate, with different totems, and who made the territorial divisions of Shilluk-land. Thus, he is both a unifying and a differentiating principle in Shilluk thought. The processes of individuation and separation, attributed to Nyikang, involve the creation of the ordered relationship of the individual and separate parts to each other, as the Shilluk understand it. Myths of Nyikang are ways of apprehending that relationship. It is said, for example, that the Naha have some right,

¹ Holmquist, 1929, p. 42.

² Ibid., p. 42.

³ Howell and Thomson, 1946, p. 18.

⁴ Ibid., *passim*.

⁵ Opler, 1948 (II), p. 112.

⁶ Holmquist, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

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which is now not considered, to take part in the election of the Shilluk king. This right comes from Nyikang, who originally married his daughter to a Nuba, and received from the Nuba an inbred stool, a replica of which is now the 'throne' of the Shilluk.¹ Such a myth, for the Shilluk, gives the Nuba a customary place in the social order of the Shilluk world. There are other examples which show that Nyikang explains differentiation, as he explains the relationship between the differentiated parts. One illustration may be taken from a myth of Nyikang's making people from animals,² and another, from the nature of the territorial divisions of the Shilluk kingdom.

It is said that when Nyikang first arrived in his land with his followers, he made people for his kingdom out of insects, fish, and animals. These he captured and turned into human beings, and they are the origin of the Shilluk common people. After Nyikang had made these people from the animal creation, the parent stock was removed by death,³ so that their children might not know of their origin. So the Shilluk common people derive their humanity, and their separateness from the animal creation, from the action of Nyikang. They claim, however, that their totems were given them by Nyikang,⁴ who thus both separated them from the non-human creation, and also established an ordered relationship between some of the descent groups of his kingdom and various non-human species. According to another account, Nyikang alone was able to recognize that men were misquadrating as animals and, seeing through this confusion, he captured them and made them into the men they really were.⁵ This story shows Nyikang able to distinguish between appearance and reality, and to assimilate the reality to his kingdom.

Partition of the Shilluk kingdom by Nyikang

The clearest example of Nyikang's position in Shilluk cosmology—that is, their apprehension of the differentiation and the correlation of the parts of their world—is to be found in the territorial partition of the Shilluk kingdom, and this is here described at some length. Nyikang is thought to have entered present Shilluk country in the south-west, near Tonga, and to have moved along the west bank of the river until he established the northern limits of his country near Mamon, founding villages on the way, and associating them with his followers, his clients, or himself. The dominant images of various Shilluk settlements thus owe their association with the land in which they live to Nyikang. Westermann says that the Shilluk themselves think of their land as a whole by referring to Tonga and Mamon, its most northerly and southerly settlements, which term 'corresponds exactly to the expression of the ancient Hebrews: from Dan unto Berekah'.⁶ Shilluk country is now divided into two provinces, Ger, or Gorr, in the north and

¹ Holmboe, *op. cit.* p. 21.

² Westermann, *op. cit.* p. 126; Opler, *op. cit.* pp. 122, 123.

³ Holmboe, *op. cit.* p. 22.

⁴ Opler, *op. cit.* p. 122.

⁵ Westermann, *op. cit.*, Introduction, 20.

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643 shot and the effigy of Nyikang then comes, and the effigies are returned to their shrines and the king is installed. Thus, in order that the king-shot of the Shilluk shall be understood to have become one with Nyikang, separation and opposition between him and the effigy of Nyikang are created and resolved after fighting in mock battle. This resolution of the separation of the king-shot and Nyikang is also a unification of the motives of the Shilluk kingdom for, in the mock fighting, Gai Nyikang supports the king-shot, while Gai Diding supports the effigy of Nyikang. Here again, 644 Nyikang and the Shilluk king may be seen to represent the principle by which the whole Shilluk kingdom is differentiated into parts, and by which these parts are again comprehended in a whole. In the installation of the new king the unity and integrity of the Shilluk kingdom under Nyikang and the king are stressed at the same time as the necessary nature of its parts. The unifying of the parts is not then a function of their subordination to a larger national whole, in which their rights to separate existence are surrendered.¹ It is a function of the acquiescence by all of Nyikang and the king, through whom are understood the notions of unity in diversity, which have here been briefly discussed.

The Concept of Jook (God)

182 There is a Shilluk proverb which says that 'the Shilluk customs come from Nyikang',² and I have preferred to suggest something of the general significance of Nyikang, rather than to exemplify in detail all the customs which the Shilluk say are derived from him. For, in saying that their customs derive from Nyikang, the Shilluk are speaking both of an original and supposedly hierarchical king, and of complex notions of order and permanence which form what we should have to call a metaphysical system. When the Shilluk make an ideal correlation, whether of parts of the body social, or parts of Shilluk-kind, or parts of the natural physical ambient, they introduce the concept of Nyikang. By reference to him they make the most inclusive summary of the detailed order of their world and grasp that order in a single term.

776 Nyikang is necessary for the Shilluk understanding of their social and spatial categories, but he does not explain his own existence, nor the grounds for the reality which, for the Shilluk, he ordered in the categories by which they comprehend it. The nature of that reality is understood through the notion of jook, God, to which I now turn. It has already been said that the Shilluk explain the superiority and dominance of foreigners by a preference shown them by jook. In Shilluk story it is jook, not Nyikang, who created the world, and jook is the being who maintains it and informs it in its entirety. We have so far considered, in the Shilluk understanding of Nyikang, a notion by which a wide range of phenomena are comprehended in their interrelations and explained; to that extent we have

¹ In contradistinction to some European theories of the nation-state.

² Haden, 1922, p. 274.

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considered Nyikang in the form of an abstraction somewhat removed from the real person he is for the Shilluk. Even for the Shilluk there is an element of the ideal in Nyikang, who is to that extent an abstraction. Their divine being, *juak*, is a still more abstract notion and ultimately explains a wider range of diverse phenomena. 776

Juak is usually said to be the supreme being of the Shilluk, to be spirit, and to be 'the greatest spirit', and to be in some sense above Nyikang.¹ He is thus not inappropriately spoken of as 'God', provided that the use of this name is not allowed to introduce a more sharply defined concept of his nature than the notion of him formed by the Shilluk themselves. In many cases it would make the Shilluk texts more intelligible, and involve fewer contradictions in translation, if we were to think of *juak* not so much as the supreme being in a quasi-social hierarchy of 'beings', but as that being upon which, for the Shilluk, everything else is contingent. It is clear that if the Shilluk are asked whether God has a body or is spiritual, they answer that he is spiritual or 'like the wind', for he exists for them in no single mode, is omnipresent or multipresent, and is invisible. I do not think, however, that this separation between the material and the spiritual, by which *juak* must be placed in one or the other category, is one which would spontaneously occur to the Shilluk. They have different words for the 'spirits' of the dead. 'Spirit' generally, if it is to be distinguished from matter or body, is *wri*, which comes from the common Nilotic root meaning life or breath, and thus soul or spirit, and distinguishes what is active and alive from what is inert and lifeless. So, in translating the word *juak* as 'God', and saying that he is spirit, it is desirable not to introduce foreign conceptions of the nature of the Shilluk God as he is in himself. There is no Shilluk definition of his nature comparable to that with which those accustomed to revealed religions are familiar. [774]

Juak, the being which created and still maintains all the world and what is in it, is one in essence, though, as it were, with many facets, which seem to refract him into a multiplicity of 'beings'. These resemble what we think of as spirits and manifestations of various sorts, and for us our use of these different words is enough to separate what they denote, conceptually, from God. For the Shilluk, who use the same word *juak* for each item in the multiplicity of forms and manifestations, and also for the principle manifest in them all, the conceptual distinction between the supreme being and other beings associated but not identical with him is not verbally made.

Hafsmayr records a complex metaphysical statement made about *juak* by a Shilluk, who explained that *juak*, God, 'is from one side spirit (*wri*), and from the other side spirit, but from front and back he is body (*del*)'.² By this we can only understand that the human experience of *juak* may be an experience of something which takes material forms, but that these have

¹ The fullest account of the meaning of the word *juak* is in Hafsmayr, op. cit., and most of what follows comes from that source unless otherwise indicated.

² Op. cit., p. 209.

- 776 a third, a spiritual or ideal, dimension. To put this in another way, the Shilluk quotation suggests that what is material has another, non-material, dimension, and we are told that *juok* is 'present to a greater or lesser degree in all things'.¹ Although *juok*, as the first principle, is the ultimate explanation for everything, the notion of *juok* seems to be particularly used to account for such phenomena as elude explanation in less abstract terms. It is a necessary logical concept for the Shilluk. Seligman quotes Dr. Henzley as saying of *juok* that 'he appears to be one, and yet seems to be a plurality as well ... anything the Shilluk cannot understand is *juok*'.² That is, what the Shilluk cannot otherwise account for, they account for by this concept. So, for example, the creation of the world and of life is the work of *juok*, and he may also be an explanation for sickness and death. The presence and powers of the foreigners are explained with reference to *juok*, for those who are specially gifted are supposed to be so by virtue of the stronger flow, in them, of the being which created and animates the universe. *Juok*, therefore, is the support of Nyikang and the Shilluk kings.
- 776 Since they represent, for the Shilluk, the order of the society and the world in which they live, and since *juok* has his place in that order, it is to be expected that for them Nyikang should also be an indication of the nature of God. So, in what Hofmayr says is the oldest Shilluk song, Nyikang is represented as speaking for God 'thus God says'.³ This association between God and Nyikang is, of course, what has led to the anthropological study of Nyikang and his successors as 'divine kings'. God and Nyikang are two terms of Shilluk thought which cannot be reduced to any third term, but co-exist and participate in each other.

Relation of Nyikang to God

- 776 Examples of this are numerous. It is said that there are few direct appeals to God, and that Nyikang is usually invoked as an intermediary. Westermann quotes a prayer which 'is said to be the only prayer to *juok*', and says that the Shilluk were taught it by Nyikang. This explanation was, presumably, given him by a Shilluk, and is an example of their interpretation of God by Nyikang already mentioned. Part of the prayer runs:

[539] There is no one above thee, thou God. Thou becomest the grandfather of Nyikango; it is thou (Nyikango) who walkest with God; thou becomest the grandfather (of man), and thy son Dak. If famine comes, is it not given by thee? So as this cow stands here, is it not thou: if she dies, does her blood not go to thee? Thou God, and thou who becomest Nyikango, and thy son Dak! But the soul (of man), is it not thine own? It is thou who liftest up (the sick).⁴

- 776 The association between Nyikang and God in this prayer is so close that it is sometimes difficult to know which is addressed. Since the Shilluk myth and tradition tell them much more about the nature of Nyikang, who is a man, than about the nature of God, who is not, it is to be expected that they

¹ Howell and Thomson, 1946, p. 8.

² Hofmayr, 1925, p. 7.

³ C. G. Seligman, 1932, p. 76.

⁴ Westermann, 1912, p. 171.

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should understand the more abstract notion, God, by the less abstract, Nyikang. A still clearer example of the approximation of Nyikang to God in Shilluk thought is to be found in a prayer, part of which runs:

We praise you, you who are God. Protect us, we are in your hands, and protect us, save us. You and Nikwang, you are the ones, who created, ... and it is you Nikwang, who are accustomed to assist God to save, and it is you who give the rain. The sun is yours, and the sea (river) is yours, you who are Nikwang ... The cow (her sacrifice) is here for you, and the blood will go to God and you.⁵³ 782

Here also may be seen the attribution to Nyikang of control of the sun and the river which, along with the rain mentioned in the first prayer, are the features of the Shilluk world upon which their prosperity ultimately depends, and which may help or ruin them. 781

God, Nyikang, and the Shilluk kings seem to form a continuum in the Shilluk religious system. Nyikang is thus sometimes called *jash piy* (piy being earth or world) while God is either simply *jash*, or *jash mal*, God above. The Shilluk king, 'the representative of Nyikang, is chosen ultimately by God, as he is accepted and possessed predominantly by Nyikang. A long Shilluk epic begins with the lines 'Nyikang joined with God, the election was held ...', the election being that of King Kur.⁶ There are reports of a form of election slightly different from that described earlier in this essay. In Hofmayr's account the king-elect is agreed upon by the electors much in the way described, but Nuba from Liri, with whom Nyikang formed a relationship, are said to come with pebbles, which represent those who have a right to succeed. These pebbles, one of which has been prepared beforehand to represent the chosen candidate, are thrown into the fire, and the pebble representing the king-elect turns red, or white, or red and white. Red stands for prosperity in cattle, white for good crops. The chosen prince is then challenged to fight at night and, if he acquits himself well, he is told that he is a brave man, and that God has decreed that he shall be king of the Shilluk. The installation ceremonies then proceed. At one point in them, when the king-elect enters the village of Debalo on his way to the capital at Fashoda, the chief of Debalo asks him, 'What do you want here?' and the king-elect replies, 'I am the man sent by God to rule the land of the Shilluk'.⁷ Despite the election there is thus a 'fiction' that it is God who chooses the Shilluk king and is the ultimate support of the Shilluk kingship. The order of the Shilluk kingdom depends upon Nyikang and the king, and Nyikang and the king derive their positions from God. 643 643 776

The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk

The connexion between God and Nyikang is of great importance in defining the sort of 'divine kingship' which is the central feature of the Shilluk 776

⁵ Oyster, 1918, (30) p. 285.

⁶ Hofmayr, 1925, p. 451.

⁷ Hofmayr, 1925, pp. 145 ff. Westermann, (1915, p. 122) gives an account of yet another form of election, in which sticks are placed in a fire, the one which flames most representing the king-elect.

776 cosmological system. Nyikang and Nyikang are the most general explanatory concepts the Shilluk have, *Jook* or God accounting for the existence and nature of reality, and Nyikang for the way in which the Shilluk order and interpret it. Though Nyikang may be called *Jook* *piy* (God below) he does not represent the totality of what the concept of God means to the Shilluk. God is also apprehended in other ways, and is addressed as God the Protector, God the Giver, God the Creator, and by other titles which correspond to the various situations in which the Shilluk need to invoke him, or explain effects which they attribute to him. *Jook* is thus a common explanation for illness, for the Shilluk seem to use this word to account for what is unknown in its nature but experienced in its effects.

753 The Shilluk God is the final explanation both for what is good and what is evil, from a human point of view, but he is not himself good or evil. Howell describes him as 'a remote and amoral deity . . . present to a greater or lesser degree in all things', and there are many indications in the literature that it would be a mistake to understand, by the Shilluk word for God, a being which could be defined in ethical terms. It is well, in discussing Shilluk ideas, to distinguish their ethical from their religious conceptions; for though Nyikang is the foundation of and sanction for Shilluk customary behaviour, and God is the support of Nyikang, in neither case is there any emphasis on intrinsic ethical qualities. Nyikang is not the teacher or founder of an ethical system, and the attributes which he shares with God refer, not to judgements of ethical value, but to the nature of reality and its interpretation. In the biographies of the Shilluk kings their traditional reputations are not mainly founded upon whether they were just or virtuous, but upon whether the Shilluk prospered under them, whether they were effective in war, whether they were brave, and whether they were clever. Their caprices are also remembered.

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Nyikang and Dak were the most important Shilluk kings and may be regarded as models of what the ideal Shilluk king should be. Some account of their lives has already been given, but it has perhaps not been made clear that the stories recorded of them emphasise their intrigues, deceptions, and intelligence, and the craftiness which seems for the Shilluk to be a sign of the particular gifts of God. Thus, in the story of the attempt by Dimo to kill Dak, when Nyikang made the effigy which was speared in Dak's stead, it is said that Dimo said 'Nyikang is a fool, but Dak is full of talk', which means, says Oyler, that Dak was a man of ideas. He also says that Nyikang 'was an inventor, and many of the things in everyday use . . . were first made by Nyikang'. In their contests with Dimo, Nyikang and Dak show themselves both more powerful and cleverer, and in this cleverness they are alike. Dak particularly, the son who effectively succeeds his father and is second in importance only to Nyikang himself, is shown to be not only

² Howell and Thomson, 1946, p. 8.

³ Oyler, 1918 (I), p. 108. In this account, it is said that Dak made the effigy, though in other accounts, e.g. Westermann, 1912, p. 199, Nyikang made the effigy.

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mischievous and aggressive, but also a wickedster who (seldom) attempts to deceive his father for his own advantage.¹ Wassenaar² quotes a text in which Nyikang commands a lie (perhaps a limited power), and another in which it is made clear that it was Dei's cunning which resulted in the catching of one of the creatures, described as a jack, with which the Shilluk kingdom was originally built up. The traditions of the Shilluk kings recorded by Hofmeyr give details of their sagacity and cunning, their military prowess, and their cruelty and caprice. In this way they are appointed to God for them, and particularly intelligence and knowledge, are qualities by which a man manifests the power of God in him. The very nature of the election to the Shilluk kingship gives an advantage to the clever, as well as to the ruthless and brave, and the office must constantly have offered opportunities for intrigue and homicide. These features of 'divine kingship' tend to be somewhat elided in European accounts of the sacred character of the office, but some of the interest of the Shilluk kingship lies in the fact that the sort of sacredness it represents is little associated with an ethical code. Nyikang and the kings, along with God, are nevertheless for the Shilluk the sanctions for the customary rules and norms of behaviour. Thus the sanction for the customary moral order of Shilluk society is not conceived primarily in ethical terms, but as a manifestation of successful power and intelligence. So the test of kingship is success in the widest sense, and an unsuccessful king is soon killed by his rivals or disposed of by his retainers.³

Social Values: Cleverness and Success

That intelligence and success are attributed to the favour of God may be seen in other ways. Spirits, or those who are divinely inspired, are shown in Shilluk stories to be both clever and successful. They know more than others, and they can turn this knowledge to their own advantage. The Shilluk *ajungo* (diviners), whose power is said to come from *jack*, are such people, and Oyler says of them that 'the Shilluks think of the witch-doctors or medicine men as good, not because their lives are good, nor yet because their practice is good, but because they are looked upon as the channels through which occult powers may be transmitted to men'.⁴ They are personally prosperous because they are necessary, and they are necessary because they know better than ordinary men how to achieve success; such a divinely inspired person may therefore be approached for help in stealing

¹ Hofmeyr, 1905, p. 81.

² 1910, p. 188.

³ I have deliberately omitted any discussion of the killing of the Shilluk king, which by some authorities is said to be a ritual putting to death when the king's powers fail. The evidence for this is very confusing; in the records of the kings given by Hofmeyr (1905), some clearly have died or been killed without occasion. It is difficult to reconcile this with the suggestion made by some authorities that the killing of the king is a ritual act performed to maintain the fertility and vitality of the land, cattle, and people, and that the occasioned killing is believed to be essential for this, though misfortune for the whole land may later be attributed to some inadequacy in the funeral rites.

⁴ Oyler, 1920.

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[25]
[713] a cow, for example. In a test given by Wassmann² the hare is taught and
served by Jack. The hare (or rabbit) is said by Hidiye to be the favourite
food in many Shilluk animal stories, and the stories quoted by him and by
Wassmann show how clever, and how lucky, the hare is. A story given by
Hidiye³ about the hare's eating young crocodiles appears in a different
form in Wassmann,⁴ where this act is attributed to Oak, the clever son
of Nyikang. The moral of these stories is that cunningness and trickery, like
knowledge, pay, and it seems as though unusual intelligence, ingenuity,
and luck capture those who possess them with the divine intelligence,
and the success for which God is the Shilluk explanation. Hidiye gives
as a translation for the Shilluk expression *jaga neri*, 'that which I have
from the highest being, my soul, my lot, luck, my other self, is favourable
to me'.⁵ The large number of Shilluk riddles is an indication of the high
value set on cleverness and ingenuity, and it is to be expected that these
qualities, held up for admiration in their stories and in their daily life,
should be ideally connected with Nyikang and their kings.

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787
986 The kings, and all others inspired by Jack, are sacred because they mani-
fest divine energy and knowledge, and they do so by being strong, cunning,
and successful, as well as by appearing to be in closer touch with the supra-
human than are ordinary men. The signs of this closer communion are dreams
and 'divine' possession, or at least some outward sign of contact with a
superior power. Examples of behaviour showing this are numerous. In the
installation ceremonies of 1945, when the king-elect was set on the sacred
wood of Nyikang at a climax in the ceremony, we are told that 'the rock
(king) was seized with a trembling fit at the critical moment, and certainly
he appeared to be in a dazed condition immediately afterwards'.⁶ This
form of behaviour is a common sign of possession by a power greater than
human among other Nilotic peoples. Though there was some reference
in these ceremonies to the king as the source of justice, and to the ethical
qualities necessary to a ruler, they were clearly distinct from the central re-
ligious significance of the ceremonies. So also, though we find many refer-
ences in Shilluk texts to God as the helper of the poor and the final court
of appeal in trouble, his activity in these respects is not to be taken as an
indication that he is only or primarily an apothecary of ethical virtue. Many
of the hymns to Nyikang and God are laments that the land is being de-
stroyed because they are not helping, and we are told that when their
prayers are not answered, the Shilluk may curse Nyikang for not assisting
them.⁷ A Shilluk proverb says that 'God threads good and evil men on a
single string', suggesting that, in some circumstances at least, God does not
seem to reward virtue and punish vice.⁸ In other texts he is shown as the
ultimate sanction for customary ethical behaviour, as a helper, and as a

² 1922, p. 180.³ *Op. cit.*, 125.⁴ Howell and Thomson, 1944, p. 62.⁵ Hidiye, 1922, p. 276.⁶ 1922, p. 276.⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 125.⁸ Olyn, 1918 (II), p. 282.

THE SHILLUK OF THE UPPER Nile

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judge, for, as the source of both good and evil, he can be regarded as indifferent, or friendly, or hostile, according to the judgement of the individual in any particular situation. His existence is taken for granted, and what people know or think of him does not alter nor define nor limit him. It is suggested by Hofmayr that the idea of punishment for wrong done is connected rather with the dissatisfied dead and with the ancestors than with the direct action of God. It is they who bring it about that God punishes the guilty.¹ Such beliefs are accompanied with very little elaboration of ideas about the state of the dead. Stories about the land of the dead, where all is quiet, as it is in the Shilluk capital of Fashoda, seem to represent fancies rather than traditionally formulated beliefs. The dead are in some sense nearer to God than are the living for they exist increasingly in a world of ideas, as the impressions they left upon their descendants become fainter with the passage of time; but, as another Shilluk proverb says, 'man does not think about death'. They pray that they may be helped in this life.

Association of Nyikang with Light and Knowledge

Mention was made earlier of a contest between Dak and Dima, in which Dak struck his opponents blind, until they accepted his superiority, when he restored their sight. The same story is sometimes told of Nyikang and Duma.² Since Nyikang and Dak represent the way in which the Shilluk know the order of their world, as well as being themselves examples of knowledge and intelligence, it is appropriate that the power to blind people should be attributed to them in myth. Another myth tells how Nyikang, in order to capture some sorcerers for his country, covered the earth with a shadow so that they could not see anything.³ This association of Nyikang with seeing and light, and thus, I suggest, with knowledge and understanding, occurs again in the belief that Nyikang sometimes shows himself in dreams as a bright light;⁴ he appears also, among other forms, as a white bull. Dak and other kings appear also in the form of a white egret. The logic of this symbolism is not specifically examined in the literature, but in Shilluk thought there seems to be some association between light and sight, and Nyikang and the kings. In the installation ceremonies of 1943, we are told that 'all objects of great sanctity were covered in white cloth . . . with all cattle [for sacrifice] it was evident how careful the Shilluk were to see that the animal was blindfold'.⁵ At the conclusion of the sacrifices which marked the stages towards the complete installation of the king, then representing Nyikang, these wrappings were torn off. The significance of this may be partly that such objects, which are holy, are also dangerous to ordinary men who must be protected from them. In the installation ceremonies, the Shilluk fled when they supposed that Nyikang had come, and again fled from the effigy of Dak, with 'a mixture of fear and laughter'.⁶ One

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 232.² Wattermann, 1912, p. 162.³ Howell and Thomson, 1946, p. 74.⁴ Oyster, 1912, (i), p. 128.⁵ Seligman, 1932, p. 75.⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

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781 these of these ceremonies was the avoidance of Nyikang and a fear of his power, accompanied by the veiling of the objects particularly associated with him. The complexity of this behaviour, particularly the 'fear and laughter', demands a more penetrating analysis than is possible here.

Conclusion

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772 In such a brief account it has been possible to give only an outline of the cosmological ideas and social values of the Shilluk, and it has been inevitable also that these should have been somewhat over-formalised and systematised. Shilluk cosmological ideas are embedded in belief and action. They are not systematised by the people themselves, who reveal them only by their sayings and their behaviour. It is impossible to give an account of them without extracting them from the reality, formulating them as ideas with a certain degree of coherence between them, and thus constructing a system which has no exact counterpart in the thought of the Shilluk themselves. Such an account is bound to show, here and there, that effort to achieve consistency which is part of our tradition, but not of theirs. I have tried to show how the order known to the Shilluk is dependent upon their belief in a mythical hero and king, Nyikang, who is the figure to which every subsequent Shilluk king is assimilated in thought. This assimilation is enacted in the ritual for the installation of each new king. Nyikang is an analogue, for the Shilluk, of the power which created and maintains the universe. That power, which I have been content to call God, is of greater importance to the Shilluk as a source of vitality, both intellectual and physical, than as a being with ethical attributes. Nyikang and the kings similarly belong not to an ethical, but to a metaphysical system. Shilluk religion is concerned with the maintenance, as a divine order, of the order in which they live and have always lived. The kings, and Nyikang, are held to represent that order, which without them would not exist. The death of a king and the installation of his successor, are therefore of critical importance in the Shilluk kingdom, and that importance is marked by ceremonies of great imaginative and symbolic richness. The importance and uniqueness of the king is similarly emphasized by the existence of a special vocabulary used of him, and by various special observances which may be studied in the literature. They mark him off from ordinary men, no less than his titles—'first-born of God', 'child of God', 'reflection of the ancestors', 'master of the world', 'last-born of God', and others. Any particular king, however, is also, as an individual human being, to some degree unequal to the office. The Shilluk have no superstitious reverence for the individual human king, and many kings have been removed by violent death when, for one reason or another, their people have tired of them. It is, perhaps, chiefly after the climax of the installation ceremonies that the dignity of the office, and the human nature

[77] * Hofmeyr, 1925, p. 120. The 'first-born' and the 'last-born' have special status, at least in Dinka thought, because the first 'opens the way' for the others, while the other 'closes the way'. They are, so to speak, the alpha and omega of generation.

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The all-powerful being who exists in the minds of the Shilluk as a cosmic and animal deity is called *Jack*. The principal medium through whom *Jack* is approached is *Nyikang*, but the distinction between them is not well defined. *Nyikang* is *Jack* but *Jack* is not *Nyikang* for *Nyikang* is also a mythological figure who takes his place in Shilluk history as the culture-hero of the Shilluk people, the founder of the royal house; as the soul of *Nyikang* is incarnate in every Shilluk ruler, he thus exists both in the past and in the present. *Nyikang* is the *rot*; the *rot* is *Nyikang*. This paradox of the unity yet separation of the three is not easy to define and the Shilluk would find it difficult to explain. *Jack*, *Nyikang*, and the ruling *rot* represent the line through which divinity runs, a conception which is similar to the ancient cult, but the cult is associated with the tribe as a whole rather than with the royal clan (Howell) or any other more restricted kinship group. The *rot* is himself the medium through whom both *Nyikang* and, more vaguely, *Jack* are approached and is the human intermediary for mankind with God. Voluntarily by ritual acts, involuntarily by reason of his very existence, the *rot* affirms the fortunes and fertility of the tribe and controls the natural phenomena which react upon crops and cattle. The *rot* is therefore the central figure of tribal religion as well as the symbol of political unity. He is responsible for the welfare and fortunes of the people both spiritually, as the present manifestation of *Nyikang*, and temporally, but less clearly, as the holder of tribal authority. 'The Shilluk would not seriously dispute the *rot*'s divine attributes (unless a follower of some alien religion), though some might doubt his mere mundane powers.'

THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY

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The extent of the *rot*'s authority is naturally of considerable importance to an analysis of Shilluk law and legal procedure, especially in the past, and an answer must be attempted even though the evidence is scanty and it is now probably too late to obtain more. The first factor of great importance in this discussion is historical, for the Shilluk have not been entirely free of alien government since 1875 and external influences prior to that date, so that, whatever the political authority of the *rot* may have been previously, since then it has been influenced by external forces. Moreover, not only the present Government, but also the Turco-Egyptian administration, appear to have attempted a rudimentary form of what in Africa has been called 'Indirect Rule', through the agency of the *rot*. However unconscious this may have been, it must have increased the powers of the *rot* to some extent and given to him an authority which in the past he may well not have possessed. This argument is not, I think, affected by the fact that so many *rots* suffered sudden death or exile at the hands of their own people or the Turks; but it is significant that during the Turkish régime the position of the *rot* was nearly always insecure. He was at any time liable to be ambushed and killed by an ambitious spirit¹ who hoped to gain the support of the Shilluk people and supplant him as reigning monarch. This potential opposition

¹ Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

² The meaning of *Nyikang* in Shilluk society will not be discussed here in detail. There is considerable literature on the subject which is listed in the Bibliography.

³ The Dinka ruler of Orop has sometimes found favour with certain Shilluk individuals and at such

is subordinate of the action of the *rot*, though it has never provided a serious threat.

⁴ Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁵ Son of a *rot* who has resigned and therefore a claimant to the throne. See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 11, and Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-14.

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I have proposed Jabel al-Jabal as a site of the Pang Garrison, because it is well protected by the mountains, and the other ones are mentioned by Heron as belonging to 1898, by Robinson in 1908 as Jabel Tola, by the Duke (Emper) of the Galla, as Jabel Tola, and by Heller as Jabel Tola and Pan, 20. It is situated to be in that direction to break the back of the Pang. It could imply the location of the Pang.

The other sites, the present Shilluk area as a site for a Pang Garrison, is supported by the Shilluk tradition. Here, as seen to exist proof that the Pang and the Shilluk did contact each other, at the very beginning of the Shilluk history as told by their tradition, Nyikang, while consolidating his power to the Shillukland by absorbing the various segments of the original inhabitants, and with a force called (in the Pang) (P), which was both identical with the people of Senaar, or the Pang. The Shilluk tradition tells of a battle at Wan-a locality a little north of Shilluk- between the Pang and the Shilluk under Nyikang's leadership. Though the Shilluk were not victorious in this battle, the Pang seem to have retired to the north, perhaps to Jabel al-Jabal.

This was the first Shilluk-Pang encounter; a hostile relationship? afterwards, on basis of some relations, of wars and slave hunting, and even of a kind of alliance in warfare. The end result of such changing relationships was the existence of many Shilluk slaves and warriors among the inhabitants of the Senaar area, in addition to other slaves from the Galla Senaars, and other parts of the Egyptian and Nubian Sudan.

Thus, we may see that the Pang were expanding to the south along, and if they expanded to the far Pang area which is a mountainous area- it would be easier for them to extend their rule up the White Nile basin, which afforded an easy geographical transition, and simultaneously affected a bigger and older culture of resources such as slaves, ivory, and other articles of trade, which were not only consumed in Senaar, but found other markets in Western Asia and Europe through Cairo. But as the upper White Nile basin is more or less an area infected with swamps and other ecological conditions alien to the Arabs and to the Pang settlers, there were as well difficult borders. It was merely a highway, and in a political sense a no-man's land.

B) The Cultural Aspects of Kingship

a) The meaning of kingship

Among the Shilluk, all writers agree that the notion of kingship is an undivided part of the Shilluk religion. Nyikang, though a national hero and possibly a real historical personality, is considered by the Shilluk to be still living to protect the land

96) Achell, (A), p. 218.

97) Lönnerstam, p. 146, see footnote No 1,

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of his followers. The Milleth do not say that Nylung died or passed away, but say that my informant told me he was angry with his people, and, in a strong sigh, was gone. This assumption is necessary for the assumption of Milleth kingship. The idea may be summarized thus:

1. Many things also cause the Milleth to see incarnation of Nylung.
2. as the soul of Nylung is then incarnated in the body of the king, it would suffer away from the body of the king.
3. as this would mean the loss of the protection and guiding spirit of the whole nation, it was necessary that the king should not be left to die of old age.
4. and thus came about the ritual killing of the king.

Among the Pong, we have no such idea about kings, and the past of kingship itself. This is due to the fact that the Pong were Muslims, and as it is taught in Islam, there is only one God, and there is no possibility of incarnation, or such would be a return to paganistic practices. So we also note about the Pong kings ever treated as the children of such an idea. Thus, one of the conditions of divine kingship, indeed the core of this kind of kingship, is lacking among the Pong.

5) The Mode of Accession to the Throne

It is easy to understand the Milleth notion of incarnation from the way they apply it. The important features which emphasize the incarnation ceremonies of Milleth kings is the crowning of the king-elect on a special stool brought for the occasion from the House of Nylung at Shawa. At first, the crown of Nylung is placed on the stool by a priest, emphasizing that Nylung himself is sitting on the stool; then the crown is removed and the king is seated. In this way, the soul of Nylung takes possession of the body of the new king, and after this ceremony, the king is considered a king.

Another important rite in a king's installation is that a king must pass a month in complete seclusion before going to Pashoda for the seating ceremony, and another ten days in a special place called Shawa to Pashoda after the seating ceremony. In this time, the king is considered to be in a solemn mood of contemplation, and in communication with his great grandfather, Nylung, and other ancestors. During this time of seclusion, the king is provided with a girl, who is given to him by a special clan. It was the custom that the king would marry this girl afterwards, but now it is according to his wish. Human sacrifices at the installation ceremony are said to be given up now, but they were practiced in the past. (6)

(6) In former times, it was usual that the king would pass over a bound old man as he marches towards Pashoda, and the multitude of the Milleth followers of the king would also tread on this man, and eventually he dies. Now a sheep and bull are used instead of the man. See Seligmann, p. 64, and Revell, p. 199.

THE SHILLUK'S BELIEF IN THE GOOD MEDICINE MEN.

BY REV. D. A. OYLER.

56 The Shilluk think of the witch doctors or medicine men as good, not because their lives are good, nor yet because their practice is good, but because they are looked upon as the channels through which occult powers may be transmitted to men. Their powers are for sale, and man in his need may go to them for help. The patient who brings no fee, will not be treated, as they do no charity work. In the contest between good and evil, they seem to typify the good, as combating the powers of the evil medicine man.

The people are not agreed as to the source whence the medicine men receive his power. Some maintain that the power comes from God, and others, that it is a heritage from the man's ancestors but the difference is not great, as those, who think of the power as coming from the ancestors, would also say that the first person of the line having the power received it from God. A medicine man is usually followed by one of his sons. The child to receive the power is designated by the father, and is usually either the oldest or youngest son, though a daughter may also be possessed of the power to work charms. The occult power may also descend on the descendants of a son or a daughter of a medicine man, who did not inherit that power, and the fact that the power of working charms comes to a person whose father was not a witch doctor may be explained as a proof of the return of the power of some forgotten ancestor.

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76 When a man begins the practice of the art the first ceremony consists of a dedication prayer something like this: "You who are God, the power is yours. In order that I may save people, help me. Father, and my ancestor, the power was yours, so help me. [50] The fee is yours, father, it will be given by me to you, and God". So the first fee is dedicated to God or to the source of the power, as a sort of payment to obtain the power. The first fee is usually a female, either a lamb, kid or calf, though occasionally a male

having the food brought to a chair, and warned them, that they would ⁶²⁸
do well to support him. He also told them, that should any man ⁶³⁷
seek to remove the food he would find great trouble. The quiet of the
night was broken by the kudu horns calling the men to assemble.

In the morning Akol came to inform the king that the men had ⁶⁴³
arrived. The fighting men stopped at a respectful distance. Akol
called the Haisum faction to come near. He was told to call the rest
of his country, and he said 'it is my country' and he then called the
Fallo men, and they came near. The king greeted them, and then
Akol proceeded to give them some advice. He informed them that
the king had given an ox to be used in the peace conference. He
told them that in the future they were to refrain from murder, on the
road, in the fields, or wherever they might meet their neighbours.
He added, "The person who will commit a murder will ruin his own
house. If you have a disagreement bring a case before the king or
the government. If busybodies from outside bring reports against
your neighbours, do not let it outrage you again."

The young men with their weapons then moved out into an open
place where they could find plenty of room for the final ceremony.
The men of each faction were separate, and Mr. Jackson, and the king
stood between them. A great crowd of spectators had gathered.
Some of them were from other villages, and some were men who from
some reason or other could not appear in the performance even
though from the interested villages.

Akol threw some dust into the air near the animal. It signified ⁷⁰¹
that as chief of the district he held the land, and it was also to ensure
that no accident would mar the ceremony.

A time of speech making followed. The visiting chieftains made ⁵³⁷
talks of exhortation in which they emphasized the solemnity of a ⁶²⁸
conference sealed with the blood of a victim. The king made a talk ⁶⁴³
in which he pointed out that in colour the animal to be killed had ⁷⁷⁶
bits of both red and black. The red was for the blood that would be
shed should some one break the covenant, and the black was for the
evil of such a course. "We, the black people unite with the red ⁶⁴⁷
(white) people of the government to reconcile you." He told them
that Akol was to be chief, and that the other responsible men were to
obey him. He informed the people that the animal was a cow of
Nyikang, that it was a descendant of a cow owned by Nyikang and

537 that its ancestors had also been owned by Dak, son of Nyikang.
648 (That was added because the people of this district pay great honor
643 to Dak.) The king added most seriously. "The flesh of this animal
776 is as my flesh, and its blood is the same as my blood. Great disaster
will come on you if you break the covenant, for you will be cursed by
the blood."

537 The other chief men spoke. The inspector inquired whether or
648 not they were ready to abide by the promises they were making, and
648 both sides declared they were.

638 Then the king called Abol saying "take the spear". The king
643 then took the spear to be used from the hand of his follower, who had
782 been carrying it. The spear was held up for the people to view, and
they were informed that the person, who dared to break the oath
would have the spear enter his body, even as the spear would later
enter the body of the sacrificer.

638 The next ceremony was to pull the tail of the animal. Abol
782 pulled for the Mainam faction, but one, who would have pulled for the
Fallo, faction was rejected as being too young. Then one of their
eldest men stepped out and pulled its tail. This act they looked
(782) upon as an oath, that the men pulling the tail were to bear the blame
if the peace should be broken. Disaster would come both to the man
who pulled and his family, should his faction break the agreement.

Abol then rubbed the spear on the back of the animal, and then
called for some one to give it the first thrust. A number who were
called to do it refused because they were too young, and they feared
the responsibility, because in case the deed should be reversed the
man who shed the blood would be held guilty. Even then a chance
was given to the people to refuse. They said, "If you do not, want
peace, do not let the blood be spilled." A man was found to strike
the animal. He gave it a serious wound. The animal walked toward
(782) Fallo. The people declared that the animal was showing that Fallo
was responsible for its death, that is Fallo had been the original
transgressor in the trouble. One young man from the Mainam
faction said the decision was sure to be against Fallo because the
animal had been brought from Malakal with some cattle which were
then in Fallo, and the wounded animal was almost sure to turn back
toward them. Then men from both factions speared it, and the
animal fell.

105 similar to that of the Nuer and Dinka. They have, however, an established and theoretically omnipotent monarchy, of which there is no counterpart among their more democratic Nilotic neighbours, and which shows more definite and developed principles than those found in the institution of kings among the Anuk and chiefs among the Acholi. Whether this established and institutionalized monarchy is the result of diffusion from elsewhere or a natural and spontaneous development from the politico-religious functionaries who exist in embryo form among other Shilluk-speaking peoples is a controversial subject, which we do not propose to discuss here.²

SHILLUK BELIEFS AND THE TRADITION OF NYIKANG.

● 776 The all-powerful being who exists in the minds of the Shilluk as a remote and amoral deity is called Juck. Juck is the Shilluk conception of God and is present to a greater or lesser degree in all things. Juck is the explanation of the unknown, the reassuring justification of all the supernatural phenomena, good or bad, of which life is made up. The principal medium through whom Juck is approached is Nyikang. The distinction between them is not clear. Nyikang is Juck, but Juck is not Nyikang, for Nyikang is also a mythological figure who takes his place as the hero-leader of Shilluk tradition. He is also the first *rit* of the Shilluk and the founder of the royal house. Further the soul of Nyikang is reincarnate in every Shilluk 673 *rit*, and thus exists both in the past and the present. 776 Nyikang is the *rit*, but the *rit* is not Nyikang. This paradox of the unity yet 773 separation of the three is not easy to define. The Shilluk themselves would find it difficult to explain. Juck, Nyikang, and the *rit* represent the line through whom divinity runs, a conception which may be expressed as an analogy to the ancestor cult, only the cult is symbolic of the tribe as a whole rather than of the Kwarit alone or other individual kinship groups. The *rit* is clearly himself the medium through whom both Nyikang and, more vaguely, Juck are approached, and is the human intercessor of mankind with God. Voluntarily by

² See C. G. Seligman, *Egypt and Negro Africa*. George Routledge and Sons, Ltd. (1924). p. 60.

INSTALLATION OF A RUK

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ritual acts, involuntarily by reason of his very existence, the ruk affects the fortunes and fertility of the tribe and controls the natural phenomena which react upon crops and cattle. The ruk is therefore the central figure of tribal religion as much as he is the actual symbol of political unity. He is responsible for their welfare and fortunes both spiritually as the present manifestation of Nyikang and temporally as the leading tribal authority. No Shilluk would seriously dispute the ruk's divine attributes (unless a follower of some alien religion) though some might resist his more mundane powers.

The genealogy of the royal house of the Shilluk goes back for countless generations, but Fafini Yee, who ruled the Shilluk since 1927, was the 29th ruk because in many cases the succession has passed to brothers of the same generation or even back a generation to an uncle. This is clear from the genealogy recorded by Hoffmeyer and adopted by Seligman and Pamphrey (Vide Appendix IV).

The main factors governing the succession of Shilluk ruks are these:

1. That only the son of a ruk who has ruled the Shilluk is eligible. More distant relatives have no claim. The son of a ruk is entitled *nyirok* in Shilluk.
2. That it is recognized that a *nyirok* may at any time attempt to usurp the throne after killing the ruk.
3. For this reason the ruk's sons or sons of previous ruks are always potentially in opposition to the ruling ruk, and they are not allowed within the confines of Fashoda at night. Theoretically at any rate, the ruk must take every precaution to avoid this danger. For example it is never known in which of the many huts he sleeps at night; he is said to move from one to another, and prowls round Fashoda at night if he suspects a marauder. The new ruk Anci showed us some spears with a special black finish, which he had imported from Dinka country, and

1943 dance at Fashoda lasted three days only, and no dance was held at Fashoda at all.

1943 The duties of organizing the dance and of beating the drums fall to a class called Kwanyir, the majority of whom live in the vicinity of Kadiak. They are responsible for discipline among the dancers, and in particular for keeping unauthorized persons out of the sacred spots. About two hundred and fifty bulls were slaughtered for the occasion, fifty of which were provided by the family of Fashit and the rest by well-wishers, who included a number of Arab merchants. The distribution of meat was arranged by Kwanyir Kir, chief of Fadiang, who is chief of all the Fashit. As he is senile, blind and deaf, he was assisted by Kwanyir Kir, chief of Lal and government court chief of the Fashoda division for the portion of Gol Nyikang.

1943 The new ruler has no special functions to perform, and it was noticeable how careful he was to keep himself in the background. He never appeared in public while the dances were in progress, and though he attended on all three days he always went straight to his hut on arrival, and remained there during the day, and until he was ready to return to Fashoda. It was obvious that the proceedings concerned the late ruler alone, and it was his son Nyawo Fashit who acted as host.

1943 We had hoped that the form in which the contingents of dancers came in would throw some light on the traditional grouping of Shilluk sections and former political organization. We had been told by the ruler that all sections in the three divisions of Fashoda, Golbainy, and Detwak would be represented, and no one else. In fact a contingent also came from the Athodwol division from north of Detwak. As far as could be seen the size of the contingents corresponded with the poll tax lists, and from those contingents who did come, very few warriors could have been missing. In the confusion of the dance it was not easy to see how the sections grouped themselves, but we got the impression that the Golbainy division split up into what, in government terminology are called "sections," but which tribally are more like the other divisions which participated. For example the sections

643 by a number of his wives carrying his personal luggage and his food,
 [643] and with him also were some of his personal bodyguards. During his three days seclusion at Debalo, the *reik* is said to be in especial danger of attack by his rivals, and extra precautions are taken for his safety.

[32] We were told—but did not see at close quarters—that fires are ceremonially lit and that fire-sticks were used for this purpose. There are three possible explanations of this; that the fire is lit as a ritual act and as part of the initiation of the *reik*; the Shilluk expression *pié war* suggests some form of symbolic purification or initiation, for it is an expression used in that context by other Nilotic; that fires were lit round the confines of the village as an added precaution against marauders; or merely numerous fires lit to cook the meat of sacrifice. [114] Both the latter explanations are suggested by Munro in his account of the installation of *reik* Fafiti in 1917.

Whether the lighting of fires was a precautionary measure of security, a ritual act, or merely for purposes of feasting, the measures taken to safeguard the *reik* were manifest in other ways. A special homestead had been built for his reception in fine style with the eight cross-ties which are a symbol of royalty. It was situated in a particularly ostentatious position in the village of Debalo. But the *reik* did not occupy it. Instead, in order to deceive his enemies, he took up residence in a very ramshackle hut, which had no embellishments whatever.

643 The *reik*'s stay at Debalo is not truly a period of seclusion. He
 776 has removed himself from all possible contact with Nyikang or his followers from the northern division of Gol Dhiang, but holds court among his own supporters, who flock in to pay homage from the division of Gol Nyikang. As yet we have formed no definite conclusions as to why the *reik* moves so hurriedly to Debalo as soon as Nyikang reaches Nyigir. Shilluk say that the *reik* has "fled" from Nyikang, and that he sends messengers to Nyikang beseeching him to stay away. It may be that this is considered a suitable sign of humility in accepting the office of *reik* of the Shilluk. Nyikang's attitude of arrogant

INSTALLATION OF A *RETH*

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resentment at the new *reth*'s presumption in occupying Fashoda at all becomes apparent later in the ceremonies. It is possible that Nyikang is believed to resent the unwarranted seizure of his powers by a person who may be unworthy of the trust. This complex attitude is one of the main problems of the installation, for it is undoubtedly an attitude which conditions the behaviour of the *reth* later in the ceremonies, and is the object of the two battles fought out by the opposing armies.

Meanwhile further preparations for the final ceremonies were being made. The small grass huts called *adol*, which form the temporary camp outside the shrine of Nyikang at Fashoda, were built by the chief of Gai Dbiang and Gai Nyikang. This camp is used at a later period in the installation ceremonies, but it had to be built previously by these chiefs who are traditionally responsible for its erection. It is not built by orders of the chiefs to their own followers, though the latter bring in the materials, but with their own hands.

On the evening of the last day at Fashoda a procession arrived from Lal and passed through Dehale. This was the party responsible for bringing the spear of Nyikang and with it the sacred beads, which are said to have been part of the bride-wealth of Adwal, daughter of Nyikang, who married a man from the Nuba Mountains. The beads came from the shrine of Nyikang at Orero in Lal, and were guarded by the eldest and largest of Nyikang's spears, which was, like all really sacred objects among the Shilluk, wrapped in white cloth. They were carried on the head of a *ny:reth* (a daughter of a *reth*) specially appointed for the purpose. They are said to be red and green, cylindrical and about half an inch long, but we were not allowed to see them. According to tradition, the *nyireth* and one of the *bang reth* hold a vigil by night over the beads in one of the huts called Araic on the sacred mound Aturwic. If one of the beads presents itself with a hole through it, the phenomenon is considered a good omen, and next morning it is threaded and tied to the *reth*'s ankle. If no hole is found the omen is bad, but the bead is tied to the *reth*'s ankle all the same. This ritual takes place the night after the installation of the new *reth* on the sacred stool of the Shilluk, but it takes place in strict secrecy.

[643] I have assumed in the reader some knowledge of these accounts, for the observations which are recorded here are not part of a full and detailed description, but of a note intended to amplify previous records.

643 Although the spirit of Nyikang may appear almost anywhere in Shilluk country and in the numerous shrines which are found there, I think it is safe to assume that, where the new *reth* is concerned, Nyikang disappears at the time of the actual burial of the late *reth*. His spirit appears again in the effigy which is kept at Akurwa, the most important shrine in the country, and remains there pending the final ceremonies of the installation. Until the obsequies of his predecessor are completed, the *reth*-elect is not finally accepted, though he must follow the rules laid down by tradition and must avoid pollution.

[776] Theoretically, though this no longer holds true with the administration of the present government, his position may at any time be challenged by a rival and civil war might follow. After the old *reth* has been buried, though the danger from rivals is always present, he has to face the spirit of Nyikang and to undergo the trials to which Nyikang will subject him before he is accepted as a worthy successor and is himself possessed by the spirit.

[669] Actual physical danger from other claimants, the danger of an uprising against him, which is never entirely absent throughout his reign, is at its peak, but wanes as each stage is successfully passed. All this is expressed by the conventional attitudes displayed by him and his people and in the ordeals he must undergo. Thus, though there may be no real danger of armed conflict, the situation demands that these conventions be followed and throughout there is an atmosphere of insecurity.

[775] We are here concerned with the election and installation of Kur wad Fafiti. As the son of a *reth* who ruled the Shilluk for so long and so successfully' and coming immediately after two *reths* whose reigns were short and by no means universally popular, Kur was a likely candidate and it was generally accepted that one of the house of Fafiti was the obvious choice. The Electoral College of chiefs sat at Fashoda immediately after the body of Dak wad Fadiet had been immured in the hut at Debwor. Mr. J. L. Baker, who was present, describes the procedure as follows:

"On the 13th May, 1951, the Electoral College sat without further delay as the chiefs wanted a new *reth* quickly owing to the approach of the rains. Also the issue was pretty clear from the outset as, apart from one or two chiefs in Golbainy, the Shilluk were solidly in favour of nyireth Kur—a man known to me as a very well-behaved and dignified type, from Bapi behind Kodok. The College on this occasion was ten strong (no Tonga people had arrived, but this was not considered important). The following sat:

1. Jago Yorleiker (Gol Dhiang)
2. Jago Thabo (Gol Nyikang)
3. Kwanyireth Cayo (jung kwareth)

[113] 'There were occasional conspiracies against Fafiti, notably that of Nyawello and Kur in 1932. See Pumphrey, M. E. C., *The Shilluk Tribe*, S.N.R. Vol. 24 p. 5.

'Jago jung kwareth, lit. "the chief of the chiefs of the kwareth." The title was apparently given to this branch of the royal house by *reth* Nyakwac.

country to the other, a distance of about one hundred and sixty miles. Here, with the help of Mr. J. L. Baker and Mr. J. O. Udal, I can only supplement our previous accounts by recording actual observations made on this occasion with additional information from Shilluk who attended. Mr. Baker was unfortunately transferred to another district a few days before the final ceremonies.

Before describing the events as they occurred on this occasion, it will be as well to summarise the main features of the ceremonies according to traditional practice. In the installations of the various Shilluk *reths* of which we have records there has been no great deviation from the general principles and what differences are found concern the actual timing and minor alterations in ritual.

The rôle of Nyikang

We have already seen that when the soul of Nyikang has finally left the person of the late *reth*, he appears in effigy at Akurwa. This effigy, together with that of Dak, son of Nyikang, made of bamboo and ambatch surmounted by huge plumes of ostrich feathers*, sometimes appear in public during the lifetime of a *reth*: normally they are dormant and their principal functions are concerned with the installation ceremonies. Nyikang is everywhere, but for the moment his personality is concentrated in this effigy. To the Shilluk the effigy is Nyikang, so that in all our accounts we have always spoken of Nyikang meaning both the effigy and the spirit: the two are indistinguishable. Throughout the ceremonies the effigies are treated by the Shilluk with a mixture of hilarity and dread; mixed emotions which are always apparent. When all the preparations have been completed, Nyikang and Dak are carried forth from the shrine at Akurwa and beat the bounds of Shilluk country to the north. They are carried by men of the *kwa* Nyikwom and surrounded by a bodyguard of the same clan armed with whips to clear the people from their path. They then march southwards on Fashoda.

The flight of the reth to Debalo

As soon as the *reth* hears that Nyikang draws near, he abandons the capital and retreats to the village of Debalo a few miles south of Arepejur, the watercourse which is the boundary between the two ceremonial divisions of Shilluk country, Gol Dhiang (the north) and Gol Nyikang (the south). These divisions are of great importance in the installation ceremonies and on other occasions have no real significance. The *reth* is always supported in the conventional hostilities which follow by the occupants of Gol Nyikang, and Nyikang, in his march from Akurwa to Fashoda is supported by Gol Dhiang; *gol*, literally "homestead," and a word used to describe the smallest domestic unit of Shilluk society, here merely means "home" or "country of." The origin of these two divisions is historical and the names themselves have no direct connection with the conventional opposition displayed during the installation. The two ceremonial divisions do not correspond exactly (though nearly) with similar divisions, Gerr and Luak, which have a periodic significance in quite another context". At Debalo, the *reth* remains in strict seclusion for three days, guarded by day and night, and the village is not open to anyone who is not a personal attendant or from the divisions of Gol Nyikang. The belief that he is in danger is expressed in a number of ways, including the lighting of fires all round the village at night and the fact that although a special house is built and most carefully decorated in the royal manner to receive him, he actually sleeps in one of the more dilapidated and less conspicuous houses.

* See Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 159.

* Howell & Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 75 (I).

643 seen that in general all these essential stages were faithfully fulfilled, though there was some variation in detail.

The Installation of Reth Kur wad Fafiti

[173] Preparations for the installation began almost as soon as the late *reth* was laid in the hut at Debwor and reached a crescendo of activity towards the end of the year. One of the most important ceremonies is the expedition to *podhe manyo* which lies to the north of the present Shilluk boundaries. According to tradition, this region was originally occupied by *reth* Dak, son of Nyikang, or at least regarded as legitimate raiding country, which in fact *podhe manyo* means. Mr. J. L. Baker has added to our information on this subject² and writes as follows:

"One of the major ceremonies (*kwer*) prior to the installation does not appear to have been recorded. I was not able to attend myself, but I am creditably informed that this is what happens.

"On the return of the men of Akwabai from *podhe manyo*, having brought silver wristlets and a number of rings (*gwel*) such as are normally worn by important Shilluk on the first knuckle of each finger, they visit Abworo and then Fashoda. Here the *reth* calls the *bung* Nyikango (slaves of Nyikang) and orders them to take this silver to the shrine of Akurwa where it remains. I suggest that represents the spoils of victory of the raiding party.

[173] "Then the effigy of Dak (the old one) is taken to Nyikang's island to find Nyikang. He is carried in a Shilluk canoe by the *kwa* Nyikwom and accompanied by the men of Moro whose job it is to dive for Nyikang when the time comes. When they arrive at the island, which is just north of Geiger,³ the small drum (that of Nyikang) is beaten near the bank of the river and Dak watches the water. A white bird (no special kind) should appear to show that Nyikang is near.

643 "The diver then picks up the *jam* Nyikango (offerings for Nyikang) and searches for Nyikang under the water. If Nyikang is pleased to accompany the party, he comes out of the water and, having accepted the offerings, is wrapped in cloth and taken to Akurwa, escorted by Dak and the *kwa* Nyikwom. 776 At Akurwa, it is for him to give his agreement to the proposed *reth* as candi- 778 date for the installation. The stage is now set and all that remains is the collection of hippo-hide whips (*angero*) for the *kwa* Nyikwom, which must be prepared for them, and the making of the new effigy of Nyikang. Without these preliminaries and the consent of Nyikang, signified by his presence, the installation could not take place."

By mid-January, 1952, these preparations and those which concern the *reth* were nearing completion. The installation was due to take place. There were, however, the usual and inevitable delays and it was not until towards the end of that month that Nyikang and Dak, represented in the effigies, came

² See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 37.

³ On the east bank and well north of the present boundaries of Shilluk country.

INSTALLATION OF RETH KUR.

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forth from the shrine and marched northwards to beat the bounds of Shilluk country in Muomo. The march on Fashoda then began. It is accepted custom among the Shilluk that Nyikang and his followers may seize cattle, sheep or goats which cross their path (most Shilluk are wise enough to keep them out of the way) or to demand them as offerings together with other smaller gifts from the occupants of the villages through which they pass. This licensed plundering, which is often abused beyond the bounds of piety by Nyikang's retinue, is treated by the Shilluk with admirable tolerance, for they must know that such offerings go to fill the stomachs and pockets of the *kwa* Nyikwom. It is a sacred duty cheerfully accepted. At one point on the march at Moro, however, their demands were thought to be excessive and were resisted, a demonstration which nearly ended in armed conflict and which delayed the party for a while.* They had left Akurwa on the 28th January and reached Adodo, south of Kodok, on the 4th February, and the next day, in accordance with custom, the *reth* fled to Debalo. 643
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As we have seen, it is traditional for the *reth* to remain three nights in Debalo. In fact, *reth* Kur had already made it known that he did not intend to spend more than one night there, on the grounds that his father, Fafiti, had spent no more. Fafiti's break with tradition had been dictated by the fear that he might be deprived of office or killed by a rival and the natural anxiety of the administrative authorities to get through the ceremonies as quickly as possible. In those days, the likelihood of civil war was much greater and Fafiti had been urged to cut the installation ceremonies to a minimum." Precedents of this kind count heavily in subsequent customary procedure and in this and in previous installations it was noticeable that each *reth* was inclined to follow the procedure of his father, not that of his immediate successor." This is at least one of the explanations of the variations in detail which are apparent when we compare the installation ceremonies of those *reths* of the Shilluk of which records exist. 669
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Reth Kur's decision to remain only one night at Debalo had two main effects. In the first place, fewer of those who seek absolution for the sins of the flesh (notably the seduction of unmarried girls) were able to attend, though I am told that about fifty persons presented themselves to the *reth* for this 593
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P. 21

* It appears that the effigy of Nyikang was damaged in the affray and had to be taken back to Akurwa for repairs.

"Mr. Udai writes: "When I visited the *reth* on the 26th January, he announced his intention of spending three nights at Debalo. However, when on the 2nd February there was still no definite news of the whereabouts of Nyikang, he did not attempt to disguise his irritation at the dilatoriness of the *kwa* Nyikwom and said he would follow the precedent of his father and sleep only one night at Debalo. Accordingly, after news of Nyikang's arrival at Adodo on the evening of the 4th February had reached Fashoda, *reth* Kur and Fafiti set out before sunrise for Debalo and it was arranged between the messengers of the *reth* and Nyikang that the battle should take place on the morning of the 6th February." *Reth* Kur's impatience may have been genuine, but I do not think he would have attempted to alter established custom if he had not the precedent of his father before him.

"For example, see Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

643 and also the official residence of the Ret⁽¹⁾. About 11 a.m. loud drumming in the distance gave us the first intimation that Nyakang was en route from its shrine in Nyagir and was now approaching Fashoda. In the distance on the slight slope north of Fashoda a large company could be seen with Nyakang and Dak⁽²⁾ borne aloft in the centre. Hundreds of Shilluk warriors were in attendance on Nyakang and its people. The men of Golbaing and Nyagir were acting as flank guards, and the whole array with the sun on its spears was most impressive. Once and again according to correct tradition Nyakang turned back and retraced its way to very near its starting point in Nyagir. This I understood to be indicative of Nyakang's uncertainty as to whether it would accept the new Ret and bestow on him its divine protection. The pauses and returns of the concourse became more frequent, but shorter in time and during them the warriors and maidens could be seen dancing. About this time a small band of four warriors sent by Fasiti appeared in Fashoda and proceeded to circle round it two or three times with the peculiar dancing stride of the Shilluks. This band was shortly increased to six in number, and finally took its stand on Nyakang's road. The blowing of a horn announced the appearance of the Ret's army from Akwom, a great crowd of warriors. They came on apace until near the small kher about a quarter of a mile south of Fashoda — they were chiefly from the Southern sections, although Kodok itself immediately surrounded the Ret. It was impossible to see Fasiti himself as yet owing to the crowd.

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643 The small party of six above mentioned now plays its part as a post between the Ret and Nyakang. The messengers all ran at full speed and appeared to be changed at the half way post. They are taking offers from the Ret to Nyakang. At first Nyakang refuses them, and turns back. Eventually

644¹ (1) His house consists of four fine built huts enclosed in a fence. The western hut is known as Du-Kot', and in it are kept the sacred stool, the spear, the sword and the shield. The Eastern hut is for the Ret's wives, and the other two are used for any thing the Ret likes. The stool etc. are brought out for the ceremony and redeposited in Du-Kot' afterwards.

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708 (2) Dak is the son of Nyakang: his effigy is much taller and thinner in body, but smaller in head than that of Nyakang. Both effigies are in charge of Ador son of Akol Adong of Akurwa.

NIKAWNG'S PLACE IN THE SHILLUK RELIGION

BY REV. D. S. OYLER.

The Shilluks being without a written language have lacked the means to collect and verify their religious beliefs. When asked as to their beliefs they refer to the old men, who have given them the traditions. Defects of memory, different sources of information, and the personal beliefs, and desires of the narrator, tend to give a diversity of belief. 773
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The Shilluks profess belief in a Supreme Being. He is greater than Nikawng or any other king. He is the Creator of the world, but he is far distant. They are not able to come into close contact with him, and feeling that he is far beyond their reach, and dismayed by the disasters, which come to them apparently from the hand of God, they feel the need of some one to stand between them and God. Nikawng is the chief intermediary, though others stand between them and God, either for good or evil. The distance of the Creator, and the nearness of the intercessor often tends to give him the greater power and influence. 776

They never pray to God without invoking an intercessor. A typical prayer in which Nikawng is invoked with God can be given. 776
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"We praise you, you who are God. Protect us, we are in your hands, and protect us, save me. You and Nikawng you are the ones, who created, people are in your hands, and it is you Nikawng, who are accustomed to assist God to save, and it is you who give the rain. The sun is yours, and the sea (river) is yours, you who are Nikawng. You came from under the sun, you and your father, you two saved the earth, and your son Dok; you subdued all the peoples. The cow (for sacrifice) is here for you, and the blood will go to God and you. Now hear all of you, you the people of the earth, and save us. The person who rejects your talk will die."

This veneration of Nikawng may possibly be a bit of ancestor worship. 776
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769 for they occasionally pray to their ancestors in the same way, and also to
 782 the dead chief of the village. The chief is looked upon as a father. Infre-
 776 quently they pray to the spirit of some departed friend. When a person
 787 has a pleasant dream about a departed friend, a prayer is frequently
 addressed to his spirit, as he is well disposed. The mother, brothers and
 sisters may also be invoked.

769 When prayer is to be offered to the spirit of a dead person, a female
 776 sheep is brought to the grave. If the person making the prayer is not the
 782 son of the deceased, the right ear is cut from the sheep, and tied to the
 ankle of the person making the offering, and the wounded ear is washed in
 a gourd of water, so that the blood remains in the water, and then the
 water is poured on the grave, and part of it is thrown in the eye of the
 sun (that is thrown out in front of the sun). It is for God so that it will
 745 go to him. The sheep becomes the property of the heir of the deceased.
 The prayer is offered before the ear is cut off. If the son offers, prayer is
 made to God and to the deceased, and then the sheep is killed as soon as
 the signs are right. The sheep is cut open, and the contents of the stomach
 and bowels are thrown on the house of the offerer, and then the meat is
 cooked. The meat can not be tasted until the oldest living wife of the
 deceased takes some of the soup in a small gourd, which is covered with
 a small native mat, and pours it on the grave. The soup that remains in
 the gourd is poured out in front of the house. The old men are then called
 762 to take the lead in eating the sacrifice. Women of all ages may eat of the
 sacrifice, but only the boys and old men of the males may eat, as no man
 of military age may eat of it. When the feast is finished the bones are
 carefully collected, and thrown into the river, as it would be bad if the
 bones of a devoted sheep should be gnawed by a dog.

While there is no set form for the prayer, and its length is determined
 by the sheep, yet they are all very similar, and the following is an example.

539 "We praise you, you, who are God, it was you, who gave me my
 769 father, who begot me. I pray to you also my father. Why did you go to
 776 the earth, and keep silence? Was not this your house before? When evil
 782 comes to your house, why do you not pray to God? Your house is given
 as a plaything to the people. You went to the presence of God, and we
 thought that nothing evil would befall us again, after you left. Now help,

God. Why do you leave the responsibility of saving on God alone? God's spirit becomes tired (from work), and he leaves people, and they die. Why do you not see and save us? You went to the ground, and you have forgotten that a person from another house does not guard yours.

The prayer is continued in this strain until the sheep, responding to the necessity of nature, relieves itself, and that is taken as an omen that the prayer has been heard, and a favourable answer will be given. That which comes from the sheep is put on the grave. If the omen is delayed, the sheep may be taken to a house, and left there to be brought out another day. The prayer life among the Shilluks is developed by adversity, as they seldom if ever pray, when in prosperous circumstances.

Their veneration of Nikawng does not blind their eyes to his faults. When a prayer has been offered to Nikawng, and the answer is not given as had been hoped, the disappointed one curses Nikawng. That is true especially in the case of death. When death is approaching, they sacrifice to Nikawng and God, and pray that death may be averted. If the death occurs the bereaved ones curse Nikawng, because he did not exert himself in their behalf. Apparently they do not pray to him that the condition of the deceased may be happy after death. He is sometimes spoken of as the son of God, but it is not definite, as they also use the same term in regard to his father, and one or two others.

They maintain that Nikawng still lives. He is even now watching over the Shilluks, and should he die the whole race would die, but in spite of their belief they have a sacred house for Nikawng, which is similar to the sacred houses in which the later kings have been buried. This fact weakens their statement that they believe that he still lives.

The departed leader comes back to his country on certain occasions. At night he can be heard in the sacred house, which has been dedicated to him. He sharpens his spear, or beats with his club, but when the attendants enter the house, no visible form is to be seen, but they know that the sounds were made by him. He may also ring a bell that is in the sacred house. When he is heard in the sacred house, the Shilluks say: "Nikawng walks in his country". They rejoice because it is an indication that he is actively watching over his people.

When the rains do not begin as soon as the natives think they should,

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776 the chief of the district offers a sacrifice to Nikawng so that the rains may
782 come. After the prayer has been offered, and the rain comes, if it comes
821 with a rushing sound they say that Nikawng walks in the storm, and the
rushing sound is made by his passing.

643 Once the departed king returned so that he could be seen by the eye of
776 man. The first kings did not die, but ascended. At last a time came when
775 the kings were to be identified more fully with the people, and they were to
776 be buried. The proper burial of the first king to receive that attention
from his subjects, was of such great importance that Nikawng returned to
give minute instructions as to how the king should be buried. Some say
that he actually appeared in the flesh. Others say that he appeared to a
certain old chief in a dream, and made known to him how one of his kingly
descendants should be buried.

776 At certain times the old woman, who has charge of his sacred house
778 places food in it for him. At the time of new moon the food is placed in his
782 house, and may be offered to him one day, or four days. Very early in the
792 morning the food is taken out, and eaten by the attendants. They say that
Nikawng has tasted it. Should the offering entirely disappear in the night
it would be taken as a serious omen. Milk is also placed in the house with
the food. Should the old woman keeper of the sacred house dream of the
king during the month, she places an offering of food in his house.

643 Similar offerings are made to the other kings, and also they may be
767 made to an ancestor.

776 When the harvest is beginning, before the people may eat of their grain
782 they must take an offering of their first fruits to Nikawng. After Nikawng
has been given his taste of the first fruits the people may eat freely. An
offering of the first fruits is also taken to each of the sacred houses of the
other kings.

769 Many of them take an offering of the first fruits to the grave of an
ancestor, usually the father. When offering to a father the grain is made
into a sort of batter, and poured out on the grave. The man then says that
he has given his father a taste. The worship at the family shrine dies out
when the immediate family is all gone. In the case of the kings it is kept
by all the people.

775 The power of Nikawng is upheld to some extent by a class of religious
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devotees. By some means the spirit of the king is supposed to enter into ⁷⁷⁵ people. They sometimes say that he is taken by the wind king. The spirit ⁷⁷⁶ of any of the kings who did not die may enter a person, but the greater ⁷⁸⁷ part profess to be acting for Nikawng, though Dok has a numerous following. ⁷⁵⁶ People thus possessed are said to be servants or slaves of the particular king claiming their allegiance.

The beginning of the possession is indicated by hysteria. When a person is first taken he talks about with his head swaying from side to side, and his eyes shut. Often they look as though they are going to fall, but they are always able to maintain their balance. In the night they wander about or else ward off sleep by singing songs. When a person first shows these signs, they send for a recognized servant of that king. The spirit is able to tell the people what king he represents.

The servant of the king treats the case. He makes a fire, and puts a ⁷⁸⁷ vessel of oil on it. The oil is permitted to boil, and then the patient is ⁷⁵⁵ taken near the fire. A head is put on the forehead of the person to be treated. The person in charge of the case puts one hand on the victim's head. With the other hand he seizes his hand, and thrusts it into the boiling oil or butter. If the patient is burned and cries out, and tries to run away, the possession is said to be a light case, and curable. In that case the dung of a dog is brought, and burned. The patient is then put under a cloth, and the ashes of the dog's dung, and fire are also put under the covering. The spirit is then said to be driven out. If that patient has a second attack, the spirit cannot be driven off again. If the patient is not burned by the oil, the possession is said to be complete, and measures are ⁷⁵⁶ taken to initiate him into the order of the servants of the king. Two sheep are killed, and their skins are prepared to be worn by the patient. Beads are fastened on the forehead, and about the ankle, and a string of ostrich egg shell beads is put about the neck. A spear is then placed in the patient's hand, and boiling oil or butter is placed on his forehead. The king is then revealed by hysterical actions on the part of the new servant of the king. The neighbours give presents of ornaments to the new servant of the king. ⁷⁵¹ and the person who had charge of the case gives him a gourd. A sheep is also given, and its right ear is cut off, and beads are fastened to it. The ear is then worn. The servant of the king in charge of the case gets a

756 good fee. It will not be less than two sheep, a fighting spear, a fish spear, a hoe, and a cloth. The patient is then assigned to a separate house.

[562] Both men and women are eligible to become servants of the king, but
[593] the women predominate. This ceremony does not release a woman from her husband, but when they become old they may wander about, and follow other men.

People who are not in sympathy with the ceremony are not readily admitted to see the performance. Some say that the hand is held in the boiling oil or butter, but others say that it is barely touched to the oil.

An indication of the fact that the power of Nikawng among the Shilluks is not as great as their professions would indicate, is furnished by comparing the servants of the king with the witch doctors. They work along the same lines, but the powers of the witch doctors are greater. The possessed are supposed to be holy, but they are among the most lustful of the people. They make greater claim to personal piety than the witch doctors, but their lives are no better.

[42] The women of this class are much more active than the men, who are usually idlers.

[726] They are able to give protection, for when a fight is imminent one is called to sprinkle ashes on the warriors, and Nikawng is invoked thus, "Nikawng, this village has your ashes on it, do not give it to death".

[787] They are also able to foretell future events. They often profess to be surprised at their own messages, and they are able to get into communication with the dead.

The chief work of the servants of the king is to cure disease. The so-called cures are nearly always of a magical nature.

775 The spirit of the king may not always be active in the afflicted person,
776 but it comes and goes. When a servant of the king under the power of the
756 spirit makes a statement he is not responsible for what he says, as it is merely a manifestation of the king, but if he does a wrong act under the same guidance, he is held responsible.

756 The actual workings of the servants of the king are not easy to witness, as they do not like to work before a hostile gathering. The tales of their cures told by eye witnesses vary, as they are influenced by their faith or lack of faith in the power of the medium. A few illustrations may be given

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According to the tribal mythology, Nyikang was no ordinary mortal. God, it declares, created a great white cow which came up out of the Nile and gave birth to a man child, Dhyang. His grandson Adak married a being who was half woman, half crocodile, and she became the mother of Nyikang. This affinity with the saurian inhabitants of the Nile gave Nyikang a special power over them; they came to his assistance during his great trek whenever his further passage was disputed by superior numbers, and at his command they emerged from the river, assumed human form and fought on his side until the opposition was overcome. [643 173 825]

Mysterious was his birth; so too was Nyikang's passing from this earth. Being more than mortal, death, the lot of mortals, was not for him, but during a dance he was enveloped in a whirlwind and carried alive into Heaven. And there he reigns, not God, the great Jwok Atang, but the glorious divine intercessor with God for the Shilluk people. Nyikang is very much alive indeed to the Shilluk, for his spirit enters into every Shilluk king at his installation and dwells in him until his death. [776] • [775]

The king, then, is the permanent manifestation of Nyikang to his people. He is their great high priest on earth; their intercessor for them with Nyikang, even as Nyikang is with God. Nay, more than that. It is conceivable that a European state could flourish and prosper under a sickly, or a mad, or a wicked king, or conversely, could weaken and decline, be its ruler a Hercules in strength and a Solon in administration. To the Shilluk, however, such a thing would be quite incomprehensible; to them the bodily and mental strength of the king exercises an influence upon the whole tribe, and upon it depends the well-being and the prosperity of the Shilluk race. Whilst he is strong and in full possession of his faculties the country will be prosperous; should his powers decline, then too will his people weaken and wane. Hence he must not be allowed to become enfeebled physically or mentally, must not be permitted to become senescent. For him there can be no question of abdication, of [643 793 737]

CHAPTER VIII

RELIGION

IT is so easy to suppose, when speaking of the peoples who live in the continent of Africa as pagan, that they are without any religion at all and have no knowledge or recognition of God. Yet it is absolutely untrue of them all. Certainly among the Shilluk people there is not one, no matter how remote from Christian influence, who would not willingly subscribe to the first article of the Creed: 'I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.' He does indeed believe in God, the Supreme Omnipotent Spirit, Creator of all things, Lord of life and death, the great Jwok-Atang. I once commenced instructing a dying Shilluk chief by asking him 'Do you believe in God?' He looked at me in wonder that I should ask so foolish a question, and replied 'Of course I do. All men believe in God.' And undoubtedly, to the Shilluk, God is very real. On entering a village, you are greeted in His name, '*Yi kall yi Jwok*,' i.e. 'God has brought you.' As you leave you are sped on your way with a prayer, '*Yi mith yi Jwok*.' 'May God guard you.' A person looking very seedy and sorry for himself will come and tell you that 'he has God', by which you immediately understand not that he has experienced a sudden religious conversion, but that he is sick. So too, good fortune and misfortune both are attributed to God, and of the latter, even the most crushing ones, the failure of the crops, the decimation of the cattle through plague, the death of a loved one through sickness or accident, although grieved over, are accepted resignedly as coming from God. Yet here there is a great paradox, for although God is acknowledged by the Shilluk as the Lord of all things, and His name is so frequently invoked, yet He is not worshipped by the people and to Him no prayer or sacrifice is offered.

- 776 God is considered as being far off, aloof from mankind, caring nothing for the things He has created. Men do not then approach Him directly, nor, at least on great public occasions, presume to offer sacrifice to Him. Approach to God can only be made through the great mediator, Nyikang. It is Nyikang who, though he led his people into and left them in so sorry a plight, is revered as the Father and Saviour of the Shilluk people, is worshipped as a demi-god, and is thought of as always dwelling among them in the person of the reigning king. To him are all prayers made and sacrifices offered; in his honour sacred dances are performed. His numerous shrines, located in different parts of the country in which his spirit is believed to dwell, are carefully tended by the Bang Reth, to whom fall the perquisites of the meat of the sacrifices and the tributes of grain willingly surrendered from a meagre harvest in the sacred name of Nyikang.
- 776 The king, as the personification, as it were, of Nyikang on earth, will offer the principal sacrifices on important occasions during the year, for example, to obtain a plentiful rainfall and a bumper harvest, for the averting of the plague of weaver birds which descend on the country in their millions each year and devour the ripening grain, in times of drought and flood, of epidemic among the people and plague which is carrying off the cattle. On these and similar occasions is Nyikang invoked and sacrifice offered to him by the king himself and the district chiefs, and yet it is clearly understood by all that it is not Nyikang himself who will bestow the benefit or avert the disaster, but God, moved to clemency by the intercession of Nyikang for his people. And so the second and last article of the Shilluk Creed would run 'and in Nyikang, Son of God, Father of the Shilluk people, and our only intercessor with God for us'.
- 775 Alongside the cult of Nyikang, there is also a cult of the dead. The Shilluk have only a vague notion of life after death in the Christian sense. They do, indeed, speak of the *Pa Jwak*, God's country, which is the abode of Nyikang and their ancestors, and which is reached only after months of

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difficult and weary travel, but they are hazy as to what kind of life is led in that country and suppose it to be but a continuation of the kind of life they know on this earth. Meanwhile the spirits which have not yet started on the journey to Pa Jwok hover round their graves and former homesteads and may do harm to their living relations, and a person who has died in enmity with anyone is greatly to be feared by his late enemy. All these spirits, therefore, have to be placated by offerings and sacrifices. Someone may be taken ill, and the anxious relatives call in the witch doctor to tell them which spirit is responsible for bringing this evil upon them. He consults his oracle, such as an empty calabash to which he listens intently, and then informs the people that Nyikang says such-and-such a one, recently dead, is responsible and that sacrifice and prayer must be offered to his spirit, and perhaps intercession and sacrifice is to be made at the grave of the sick person's dead father, that his spirit may prevail upon the malignant one to remove the curse from his family. Accordingly a sheep is led to the grave of the person to be placated. The right ear is cut off and washed in water and the water poured over the grave. Prayer is made both to God, Jwok-Atang (on such private occasions as this without the intercession of Nyikang), and to the dead person. Then the sheep is killed and the meat cooked. Some of the soup is poured over the grave and the meat is then eaten by those who have taken part in the sacrifice.

All former kings, and in some cases great chiefs, have their shrines. These shrines consist of two or three huts built in the usual Shilluk fashion but with much better thatching than that affected by the ordinary Shilluk and enclosed within a reed or thorn fence. As befitting the great spirit that dwells within, these shrines are kept in good repair and spotlessly clean by the duly appointed guardians. One such shrine is situated just a few hundred yards from the mission at Detwok. It consists of two large huts surrounded by a fence and is dedicated to Nyala, a woman, surprisingly enough. She was the daughter of the seventeenth

778 king, Kudit, and during her father's reign assisted him by
 776 her very able administration of the northern province of the
 kingdom. She continued in this office until her death which
 took place during the reign of Kudit's successor, Aney. To
 [731] this shrine in times of severe drought, or on the occasion of
 [782] some other such public misfortune, comes the whole popu-
 lace of the district to dance and sing and pray before it, to
 offer its tithes of grain, and to slay and sacrifice a bull to the
 spirit of Nyala.

793 The Shilluk do not possess a priesthood in the sense of a
 782 body of men dedicated to offer sacrifice; sacrifice may be
 offered publicly by the king or the chief of a district, or
 privately by any individual. There are, however, individuals
 756 who claim to have supernatural powers, to be possessed by
 754 Nyikang and to be the interpreters of his wishes, to foretell
 the future, to read auguries, to heal the sick, to avert or to
 cause evil. These people are of two kinds, the *Ajwogo*—
 literally, the 'man of God'—and the *Jal yath*, the 'medicine
 man'. The *ajwogo* deals in white magic, that is, his works
 756 are, or are supposed to be, beneficial to the community or
 755 the individual on behalf of whom his services are solicited.
 For a fee of a sheep or a goat or a cow, according to his
 rapacity and the circumstances of his client, he will do his
 best to cure or to kill a sick person that he has been called
 in to attend. For he will cheerfully administer a potion con-
 cocted of ingredients the potentialities of which, either for
 good or ill, he hasn't the slightest idea; will indulge in
 [757] blood-letting to an extent that would make an eighteenth-
 century leech blench with horror; and is not above perform-
 ing a surgical operation, despite his complete ignorance of
 anatomy and surgery, with a rusty piece of iron, or a spear
 head or some other such Shilluk equivalent of the scalpel
 and lancet. At Detwok a lovely, high-spirited cheerful girl
 was reduced to a physical wreck after her ordeal at the hands
 of one of these wretches. She became ill and was attended
 by the Sisters who thought that she should go to hospital.
 Her pagan parents refused to allow this and instead called